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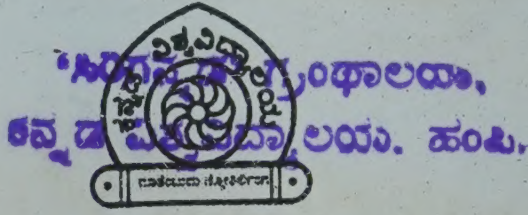
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A. B. Krishna Raja

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NATIONS

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FOLK TALK OF THE  
NATIONS

WILLIAM E. BROWN  
1895



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*A. Krishno Raja.*

FOLK TALES OF THE  
NATIONS

P. A. PAI BROS.,  
BOOK SELLERS, UDIPAL.



His eyes discovered a figure crouching in an attitude  
of fear (*see page 12*).



# ❧ FOLK TALES OF ❧ THE NATIONS

Retold by

B. L. K. HENDERSON, D.LIT.

AND C. CALVERT, B.A.



*Illustrated by Doris Williamson*

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**AKSHARA GRANTHALAYA**



**ACC.NO.**

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# FOLK TALES OF THE NATIONS

## SLENDER PINE AND THE HUNTERS

WE may, perhaps, think with pity of the hunter who is compelled to leave home and kindred and set his face towards the frozen wastes of the North. In our minds we see him crossing great fields of untrodden snow, risking his life in icy chasms, or stumbling over treacherous slopes ; sometimes hunting the beast whose skin he desires, sometimes in turn being hunted by a bear or wolf that he has disturbed but not destroyed. Yet, although he passes solitary days and nights without a single exchange of word with another human being, the hunter's life need not be entirely lonely. If he has eyes to see and ears to hear, his friend and companion is Nature, who will lay before his gaze the wildest of her moods, and will whisper to him the strangest of her stories. For him, the wild duck with clamorous cries sweep across the sky ; for him, bear, fox, and the lonely grey wolf trek steadily from place to place as icy winds drive them to seek winter shelter. Elsewhere, Nature shows how she can rear her children in the cruellest of circumstances, planting here a clump of pines or poplars, or still farther to the north rearing the spruce and willow. If he stayed on

into the summer Nature would fill his soul with joy at the sight of returning buds and blossoms—anemones giving place to tulips, blueberries, white-flowered moonberries, and purple blossoming lichens elbowing each other for room to trail or display their rich profusion.

The hunter, however, does not stay to see the summer's glory. As soon as the first wind tells him of the coming of spring, he gathers up the store of furs he has collected during the cold winter, and sets off to sell them, and buy stores to carry back to his hunting ground as soon as the first sharp frost of autumn has blackened fruit and flower.

Wonderful as are the scenes Nature draws for the hunter, stranger things sometimes befall him, so that when he goes back to his own kin he has a marvellous tale to tell, and it loses nothing in the retelling. Rather it grows, as does yeast in a bowl of flour.

Among those hunters who once experienced strange events were Black Hawk and Swift Arrow, sons of Cunning Foot, an old and very wise Algonquin Indian. Their family was famous for its skill in the chase, and its credit was not likely to languish while Black Hawk and Swift Arrow could draw a bow or throw a spear. It was a stirring sight to see the two brothers set off in the autumn for their winter quarters—for they always hunted together. Their toboggans would be heavily laden, as they needed not only stores of food, but also buffalo robes, tent skins, and weapons. There were bows and arrows, spears and clubs, without which no hunter's outfit would be complete, as well as cooking pots, and last, though by no means least in importance, quantities of the dried weedberry that served them for tobacco.

With this equipment the brothers stood ready to depart. As they were both unmarried, there was neither squaw nor papoose to bewail their going, and Cunning Foot, though secretly proud of his sons,



would condescend to no more than a curt nod of farewell as they left the tent.

Their journey led them far from the haunts of man. Pine and poplar they left behind ; spruce and willow waved a trembling farewell to their bent backs as, with their stores drawn behind them, they laboured forward towards the land where only dwarf moss and lichens offered a lowly greeting. Their prey was the fox, the wolf, and the bear, for whose pelts they could make profitable exchange, and the eagle, whose plumes would give them a more honourable appearance when they sat round the council fires of the tribe.

Now it happened that one winter, as they hunted, the brothers had very poor luck indeed. All their skill and cunning seemed of no avail. Their stores were growing slender ; half the winter was past. Soon it would be time to return, and if they did so carrying less than their usual tale of furry wealth, who would be so ready to sneer as those tribal brethren who had always been jealous of the brothers' skill ? They began to dread the passing of the days, and looked out anxiously every morning fearing to see some sign of that wind which furrowed the soft snow and announced the death of winter.

It was the daily duty of the younger brother to return first to the tent in order to prepare a meal for himself and for Black Hawk, who usually returned shortly after. One day, when a keen and icy blast was sweeping over the hills and across the plains, bringing in its cruel breath discomfort and pain even to the sturdiest heart, Swift Arrow made his wonted way towards the tent in an unusually depressed condition. He himself had caught nothing at all for the past three days, while his brother had found one thin wolf with so poor a pelt that he was scarce inclined to carry it back. As the youth approached their abode, he saw, with surprise, that smoke was issuing from the hole at the top of the conical tent. He hastened for-

ward. He knew full well that he had stamped out the fire before leaving in the morning, but it was clear that the tent itself was not on fire.

But when he drew nearer his surprise deepened, for, more pungent than the scent of burning wood, arose the odour of a savoury meal, making his mouth water in anticipated delight. The stringy smell of beans and meal was lost in the more alluring scent of caribou meat: yet how came caribou meat to be in their tent? For all his amazement, Swift Arrow could not help sniffing sharply as he drew near. Advancing with cunning care, he glanced sharply at the snow round about, and his keen eyes discerned the very faint imprint of two tiny feet, and, stooping down, he found that they were the marks of human feet. The hunter stood disconcerted for a moment. He could not believe that some strange mortal had penetrated their hunting ground and taken shelter in their tent. On the other hand, being, like all his race, superstitious, he dreaded to imagine that some wandering spirit had entered there. Dare he go in, he asked himself—and alone? Cautiously he peered through a slit in the flap. The fire burned brightly as though it had recently been tended, and from the pot hanging over it issued the fragrant steam that wooed his hunger. There was, however, no sign of any human being, nor indeed of any other creature visible to the eye.

Grasping his heavy club firmly in one hand, Swift Arrow boldly entered the tent, though still keeping one hand upon the flap in case of need. Yet he could see no cause for alarm. The skin blankets forming their beds were laid smoothly over the dried leaves and branches on the ground, while the crude bowls from which they ate stood clean and ready for use. To Swift Arrow, the whole thing was a mystery. He could not imagine whose handiwork it was, but with the taciturnity that characterized the men of his tribe he decided to say nothing about it to Black Hawk.

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He would solve the problem in his own way. Fortunately, the elder brother was too tired to notice the unusual tidiness of the tent and the extra savouriness of the meal. He ate his food in silence, and later, with his pipe between his lips, set about mending some well-worn moccasins with just that amount of clumsiness every man betrays at such a task, yet also with the degree of ease derived from long custom. When his tasks were done, to Swift Arrow's relief and gratitude, Black Hawk flung himself down on his bed and was soon asleep. The other, meanwhile, sat before the fire, pondering the events of the day, and sucking musingly at the pipe between his lips.

"To-morrow," he thought to himself, "I must return earlier to the tent. If the strange being comes again I shall be here in time to see what is to be seen."

The next morning he said craftily to his brother—  
*nickly* "Brother, time passes apace. Let us take separate ways for our hunting. Perhaps we shall have better luck. I will return as usual when the sun has fallen half-way from the heavens towards the west."

"Let it be so," agreed Black Hawk, and for the first time the pair separated.

It seemed at first as though a good spirit were at Swift Arrow's side. Quite early in the day he noticed a fine fox working its crafty way along a rocky ledge. With equal cunning the hunter followed, and before long a limp fur hung from his belt. He thus felt justified in turning tentwards soon after the sun had begun to dip towards its bed. He was congratulating himself on his good fortune when a sharp snapping sound, followed by a sudden discomfort about one of his feet, warned him that the thongs of one of his snow-shoes were broken. He fumbled savagely at the offending shoe, but for all his speed was later than usual in reaching the camp.

All was as it had been on the previous evening. Outside, were the marks of tiny feet. Inside, the fire,

the boiling pot, the clean bowls gave, had he recognized it, every indication of being the handiwork of a woman. In addition, a pair of snow-shoes that he had neglected mending stood ready for use and in good order by his blankets. He was more anxious than ever to solve the mystery. How did the strange visitor know that he would want that pair of broken snow-shoes mended on that very day? The puzzle fascinated him. Black Hawk, when he returned, was so anxious to hear how Swift Arrow had secured the fox, that again he made no comment on the tidy tent or his savoury food. It was very easy for Swift Arrow to persuade his brother to let him go hunting alone the next day. The chance of securing a few fine fox pelts was not to be ignored—certainly the younger brother should go his own way. *overlook*

The following day another fine fox fell to his lot, and quite early he turned towards home. This time good fortune attended him, for he reached his tent without any mishap. Once more he watched from a distance the wood-smoke rising in graceful curls from the top of the tent, and saw the footprints in the snow. He was creeping on cautiously when he observed the flap of the tent bulge a little as if under the pressure of a human hand. Scarcely stopping to consider possible danger, he sprang forward, and, snatching the flap aside, darted into the opening.

For a moment his vision was darkened by the dim tent, then his eyes discovered a figure crouching in an attitude of fear beside the blankets on the floor. In the ruddy firelight he made out the form of a girl.

"Come here," he called sharply, keeping his back to the flap.

A moan came from the crouching figure, but it did not stir.

"Come here," he called again, more gently. "Who are you that you come and make fire and cook food for us?"



As he received no answer, he crossed the floor, and lifting a passive, frightened form to its feet, looked carefully at it. He saw that it was indeed a girl, who in turn raised such big black eyes to his face, that he was reminded of a timid bird.

"Do not be angry with me," she pleaded in a little whispering voice. "I have done no harm. I did but try to help you."

"Angry!" echoed Swift Arrow. "Why should I be angry? Have you not for three days past saved me much labour? But who are you? How do you come here, and where do you go? Surely no other hunters are near about—and you are dressed as a chief's daughter!"

"I am no one in particular," she answered. "I come on the wings of the wind and depart on the back of the eagle."

The hunter was now busy studying the details of her dress. That she was beautiful, even he, who knew little of women and girls save the ungainly squaws of the lodge, could see. With equal ease he realized that she was dressed in such a manner as would become the daughter of a great chief. Over her slender body, clad in its quill-embroidered tunic, was thrown a skin robe edged with ermine, for she had been about to depart when Swift Arrow's entrance had sent her, frightened and trembling, to crouch beside the blankets. Her arms were weighed down with heavy silver bands, and on her feet were buck-skin boots trimmed with costly fur. What perhaps caught the hunter's attention most were the rows and rows of the necklace that she wore. There must have been at least a dozen of them carefully arranged in increasing length. A mere glance at it told him that it was of inestimable value. In his own tribe, even though it was a rich one, wampum was rare on account of its price, and here before his eyes were some dozen rows of the most delicately coloured shells cut into count-

less airy and fantastic shapes. He stood for a moment spellbound, failing, in his wonder, to notice the equally glorious sight of the firelight playing upon her dusky hair.

Her voice roused him from his state of amazement.

"I wanted to help you," she repeated; "but now I must go, for soon your brother will be here."

"No, no, you cannot go away," cried Swift Arrow, who scarcely knew what he said, so charmed was he with the slender figure.

"I must," she urged, "for I fear your brother."

"Fear him!" repeated Swift Arrow. "But you do not know him!"

"I must go," said the girl in a distressed tone. "I will come back to-morrow, but I must go now."

Before the youth could restrain her, she had darted past him and through the opening of the tent. Though he lost no time in following, she was out of sight before Swift Arrow could reach the flap. He had perforce to be content with her promise to return, and by the time he had composed himself Black Hawk had arrived and put an end to all other considerations than himself.

On the next day likewise, the brothers hunted alone, and, on his return, the younger, to his joy, found the girl sitting in the tent waiting for him, and now she welcomed him with a smile.

Already the usual work had been done, and side by side the hunter and the girl sat and talked. Woman-like, she questioned him about everything concerning himself—his home, his father, his younger brothers, not forgetting to draw from him descriptions of all the most attractive girls of the tribe. The scantiness of his powers to satisfy her in this matter reassured her.

At last it was his turn to question. "Tell me your name," he pleaded, "and who you are."

The girl only shook her head.



"Then I shall call you Slender Pine," he said, looking at her graceful form.

She laughed. "You are far from the mark, Swift Arrow," she cried, "but have your way. Slender Pine I will be to you, and let us be happy while we may."

Again the girl grew restless as the time approached for Black Hawk's return, and her companion was compelled to let her depart. So day by day these two met, though the elder hunter knew nothing of it. At every meeting Swift Arrow begged Slender Pine to stay with them entirely, but she refused. At last, her resistance worn down by his constant pleading, she said—

"Tell your brother all that has passed. You know I can make moccasins and snow-shoes, I can cook and manage a canoe, therefore I can be useful. If he agrees to it, I will come and stay with you, for the winter is growing short."

In vain the hunter begged her to wait that evening and see Black Hawk for herself; no, she would not. When the evening meal was finished, Swift Arrow decided to mention the matter to his brother.

"Brother," he said, "I would speak with you on a matter that will affect us both. Hear me with patience."

"Speak, then," replied Black Hawk, settling himself, pipe in hand, to listen.

"Our father has told us that good and evil walk through the world——"

"Ay," broke in the other, "and they accord as ill as does melted bear-fat with water. But go on."

"Good and evil visit man according to his deserts, so we believe," continued Swift Arrow.

His brother nodded gravely.

"Well, good has visited us daily for some time past, and——"

"How so?" demanded Black Hawk, looking contemptuously at the small pile of skins that represented more than half a winter's labour.

"In this. For many days past, when I have returned from hunting to make the fire and cook the meal, I have found it already done by one who has been before me."

Black Hawk looked up sharply ; but without giving him time to speak, Swift Arrow hurried on—

"Yes, the fire has been lit and the food cooked. Also, outside in the snow I have seen the tread marks of human feet, though until a short while ago I had found no person. Then, less than half a moon since, I returned in time to catch a young girl in the tent. She would not say who she was nor whence she came, save that she rode on the wings of the wind and the back of the eagle."

He paused, but his brother said nothing. Swift Arrow continued—

"I begged her to stay, for I saw that she could be of use to us, but she said that only if you agreed would she stay. She can do all that a clever squaw can do, and, moreover, she is clad as befits a chief's daughter—finer than Bending Willow, our cousin. Say, brother," he demanded, "has she your word to stay with us?"

Black Hawk sat as if deep in thought. The minutes passed heavily for his anxious brother, who dared not show how much, for him, hung upon the answer. He had said nothing of the girl's beauty, knowing that it would be as but the weight of a single quill with the elder—nor had he thought it necessary to add how much the girl had done for him in the way of mending, for she had refused to touch anything belonging to Black Hawk.

"Let her come," he grunted at last, making up his mind that, whatever she was, she could toil for them and thus save the precious shortening winter. "But," he added churlishly, "watch her, for I like not these strange people who prowl in hunters' tents without leave."

Swift Arrow's heart beat high, though he said

(2,750)

*with some unwillingness.*



nothing in response to his brother's words except, "It shall be so."

Then the subject dropped between the two men, the elder soon flung himself down to sleep, but for the younger there was little rest that night. He longed for the day to come, so that he could tell Slender Pine to remain with them. He conned her over in his memory—the dark eyes, cloudy black hair, and graceful figure. When they went home in the spring, she would go with them and be his bride. *figure*

In the morning he watched his brother set out, delaying his own departure on pretence of mending a broken bow-string. Actually, he did not intend to go out that day. He was waiting for Slender Pine. Before the sun had risen to noon height, the girl appeared on the sparkling slope leading to the tent. Behind her she drew a heavily laden toboggan as though she already knew the result of Black Hawk's decision. Swift Arrow rushed out to meet her, too overjoyed to notice her laden sledge or question her apparent knowledge of his brother's decision.

"Black Hawk says 'Come!'" he said simply.

The girl nodded gravely, though a disturbed light filled her eyes as if she were looking into the misty future and saw danger to herself or another whom she loved. Then she looked up gaily, and said, "That is well, for see, I have brought my sledge with me. And now I can look after you properly, as a good squaw should." *often*

"You do not fear Black Hawk now?" asked her companion anxiously.

"Let us not talk of fear or anything else that is not cheerful and happy," she responded. "Come, help me to unpack my goods. I have all my treasures here. See my blankets, my furs, my tunics, and my bows and arrows—for I too can hunt. Yes," she added, "wait till we go hunting together. You shall see then if I cannot hunt!" ✓

Together the man and the girl busied themselves with setting the tent in order and disposing of the latter's possessions.

Swift Arrow in the strange new happiness that possessed his heart would have given her the best sleeping-place and the warmest corner of the fireside, but she drew back.

"They belong to your brother, Black Hawk," she said. "It is not seemly that I should take his place."

Almost as she spoke the elder brother appeared in the tent. Slender Pine drew back, and clung to Swift Arrow's hand. It was beneath the hunter's dignity to speak to this unknown, strange girl, so he merely grunted as he saw her, and she, for her part, was thankful to be relieved of the necessity for holding converse with him. When he took his place by the fire, she served him with his food, and then slipped back into the shadows beside Swift Arrow, who could scarcely take his eyes from her.

Soon the cleverness of her fingers and her skill in hunting made her almost welcome to the elder brother, though it was the younger who loved her and whom she loved. Strangely enough too, ever since she had come to the tent their hunting had improved. Week by week the pile of skins increased. Winter seemed to have lengthened itself on their behalf, and so successful were all things that even Black Hawk, unbending one day from his usual taciturnity, told the girl that she was worth her food.

Her merry laugh cheered the long evenings, her fleet step saved them many a journey after a quarry killed at a distance. Her slim fingers strung the well-worn bows and tipped the slender arrows. She had brought with her the vitality of youth and health. More than that, she had infused joy and love into the heart of Swift Arrow, to whom she clung in her quieter moments.



Thus in busy, happy days the winter passed, and spring could no longer delay her arrival. Tiny snow flowers began to peer from their white blankets; moss and lichen grew green again, and the hunters knew that their season's work was done.

Sledges were at once got out and overhauled, ready to carry home the now rich piles of skins. Slender Pine, too, packed her sledge with the rugs and weapons she had brought with her. The work was accomplished so swiftly that, scarcely had the decision to return been made, when the brothers stood ready to depart.

Slender Pine, seeing things thus arranged, began to sob.

"What ails you?" asked Swift Arrow. *troubles*

"I must leave you now," she answered brokenly.

"Leave us!" echoed the hunters in chorus.

"Yes, my work is done—you go your way, I mine," she said.

"Indeed, you do not," said Swift Arrow decidedly. "You come with us to our father's tent. There I will marry you in the presence of all the tribe."

"No, no, that cannot be," returned Slender Pine. "I will come with you a little way on the road; but to your father's lodge, never. See here, you do not know my name, nor whence I came. Slender Pine you call me, but you do not know who I am. Your father is a proud chief. He would never receive one unknown, and he would hate me."

"Then tell us who you are," cried Black Hawk sharply. "Why all this silly mystery?"

The girl made no reply.

"Come, then," went on the hunter impatiently, "let us start. Maybe the girl will change her mind. *perhaps* If not, well, she must do as she likes, but we cannot stand here all day."

"True, brother," cried Swift Arrow hotly, "yet surely you too have been glad enough of her skill and

help. You might give her a chance to speak for herself."

"Yes, yes," replied Black Hawk. "I meant no unkindness to the girl, but let us start at any rate."

In silence the three set off. The hills, as the travellers moved away from them, seemed to clothe themselves in misty blue veils, as though hiding their faces through sorrow for departing companionship. Yet along the road came the scent of budding trees, waking to greet the warm sun. The hunters and Slender Pine travelled for several days. At night they erected their tent and rested beneath its shelter. The girl had said no more of leaving them, and though he feared to question her, Swift Arrow hoped she had overcome her curious mood, and would go with them all the way. At last they came to a broad lake where lay the canoes that the brothers had hidden on their journey north last autumn.

"Now," said Slender Pine firmly, "I bid you farewell. Say nothing to any one of our winter's work, and when you return next autumn I will be here by the lake waiting for you. Speak of me to your father and evil is sure to fall on one or all of us, for I tell you he will be black with anger. To you, Swift Arrow, whom I love," she went on, taking his hands in hers, "I say this. Not only must you never speak of me; but take care also that you never take as a bride any woman from your tribes. Every winter you shall stay here in the North with me; but, if you marry any woman you will die."

So saying, Slender Pine turned and began to move rapidly back towards the North and the dim, distant hills. The brothers stared after her retreating figure. She seemed to travel like the wind. Black Hawk merely shrugged his shoulders and began to make ready his canoe. Swift Arrow, when he realized that she had left them, started in pursuit of the retreating



figure. He ran until his lungs were near to bursting with the strain, and the perspiration poured down his face in streams. Then he cried out to her in a voice of pain and longing, but she was gone. Slowly and sadly he returned to the lake-side, where Black Hawk was ready to start. *scolded*

The latter rated his brother soundly. "Where is your pride?" he demanded. "Why do you run thus after some outcast from another camp? Come, get into your canoe, and let us be going."

Swift Arrow turned so fierce a face upon his brother that the latter shrank back. "I love Slender Pine," he said. "She loves me in return, though why she has thus left us she alone can tell. You have reaped the fruit of her labour, yet you speak of her slightingly. Beware, my brother, you shall answer for that." *insultingly*

Then he too sprang into his canoe, and the pair set off over the silent waters.

One day and one night they spent on the lake, making long furrows on its glittering surface as first sun, then moon, lighted their way. Here and there a screaming bird rose from some reedy island and wheeled over their heads, but they heeded it not. Then for four days more they travelled slowly and steadily towards the rising sun.

At last they saw the tents of their village. Old Cunning Foot grunted a welcome, to which they responded with equal brevity. Squaws hastened to serve them with food that there, as in every well-ordered tent, was ever ready in case an unexpected guest should arrive. It would have been thought shame to the greatest chief or the poorest hunter alike had a visitor been kept waiting for food.

When the pair had eaten, they spread before Cunning Foot the spoils of their hunting. Other young men of the tribe, their jealousy cloaked by a pretended friendship, gathered round, crying, "*Kari-*

*wiyah*, glad tidings. *Kariwiyah*, Black Hawk and Swift Arrow have returned."

Exclamations of wonder burst from them involuntarily as the wealth was displayed. Squirrel skins, deer skins, fox and beaver pelts, eagle feathers—indeed, an abundance of all the heart of a hunter could desire. The skins of animals rarely found so far north in winter figured in the collection.

Swift Arrow, as he looked on, thought of Slender Pine, her courage and skill, her merry laugh and gay words, and his heart grew heavy within him.

Black Hawk, however, waxed boastful. "Yes!" he cried. "You do well to admire. When have you, Long Beak, or you, Eagle Claw, or you, Red Feather, shown such a harvest?"

The young men thus addressed shrank back, painfully conscious of the scorn in Black Hawk's eye and their own poor catch in the season just past.

"Tell us," cried one, "how do you continue to do so well? We are all brothers in the tribe. Tell us your magic."

Nothing loth, the hunter began a tale of his adventures among rocky ice-bound crags and across frozen trackless wastes. Swift Arrow crept up to him, whispering a warning to beware lest he spoke of that which should not be mentioned. But Black Hawk was drunk with his own glory.

"The girl," he cried, "what of her? What had she to do with our hunting? True, she cooked and mended, but what else? Am I to lose the credit of my skill for a girl—and be made a laughing-stock in the lodge? Can I not hunt without a maid at my heels?"

"Hush, brother, hush!" whispered Swift Arrow in distress. "See, Cunning Foot, our father, listens to your talk."

Black Hawk looked round and encountered his father's fierce eyes fixed upon him.



Cunning Foot removed his pipe slowly from between his lips. "Come here, my sons," he commanded.

The brothers approached their father—the elder a little sobered by the sternness apparent in the old man's face, for he remembered Slender Pine's words :

"Your father will be black with anger."

"What talk is this I hear of a maid?" he demanded.

"You took none with you—you brought none back."

Neither replied for the moment.

"Speak!" came the sharp command.

"Swift Arrow will speak best—'tis his business. Ask him, O noble Cunning Foot," said Black Hawk craftily.

"Speak, Swift Arrow," ordered Cunning Foot.

"This, then, is the tale, O Cunning Foot," began Swift Arrow, glancing angrily at his brother. "As I returned one day from the hunt, I discovered in our tent a frightened maid who had lit our fire, cooked our food, and mended for us as might any squaw. She would not stay with us at first, but later remained with us entirely. She was a clever huntress, too, and our catch, which had been a poor one until she came, improved daily. When we made ready to return, she accompanied us part of the way, and then left us, promising to return next winter. I love her and would have made her my bride, but she would not come for fear of you. Nor would she tell us who she was, though she was clothed as a chief's daughter. That is all."

While Swift Arrow had been speaking, Cunning Foot had been twisting his pipe stem in his fingers. Suddenly it snapped under the strain, and the old man burst into a torrent of speech.

"O woe!" he cried, "woe that I have lived to hear this tale. O Great Spirit, why has this shame come upon the family of Cunning Foot, though all my life I have feared it?"

"Fools!" he cried, turning on the brothers. "All my days, I tell you, I have dreaded this thing. Your maiden is a witch—a spirit of the great forests of the North. Such as she lure men to their doom. They give them good hunting, and at night suck their spirit from them so that when they leave the hunting ground they pine and pine for the witch-woman's beauty. Then they go back, in season and out, seeking her, until at last she meets them and claims both body and soul.

"Oh, woe is me," continued the old man, rocking himself to and fro in an abandonment of grief. "She will have both of you, my sons, so skilled and brave in the hunt."

"Father," broke in Swift Arrow, "I cannot believe one so gentle and brave and beautiful to be evil as you say."

Cunning Foot started up. "Dare you," he cried, "dare you yea and nay me — your chief and father?"

Swift Arrow, for all his prowess, drew back at the sight of the furious face before him. Black Hawk had turned cold with fear at Cunning Foot's words. To have his spirit sucked from him by a witch-wife! He shuddered and trembled. It must be right—this tale his father had told. He himself recalled Slender Pine's strange little ways, her swiftness of movement, a swiftness greater than he had ever known in human being. Then, too, there was her persistent refusal to say anything about herself—who she was and where she came from! Plainly, there was only one thing to be done. This creature must be killed, and killed quickly. That night Black Hawk left his home and set off again for the frozen North.

On the following day, Swift Arrow, finding his brother had disappeared, taking with him, not spring fishing tackle as might be expected, but hunting weapons, also set off for the North, guided by intui-



tion, and fearing that which he scarce dared to name even to himself. With his best speed, Swift Arrow could not make up for his brother's start, and could not overtake him, though he drew slowly but steadily nearer and nearer.

One after the other they reached the lake and launched their canoes. Here the younger gained perceptibly upon the elder, so that when Black Hawk landed on the northern shore Swift Arrow caught his first glimpse of him.

In a little pool, lying beside the lake as a bud is set beside a flower, Black Hawk saw Slender Pine bathing. Now was his chance, and he must take it quickly, for happening to glance across the waters of the lake he saw, a short distance away, a canoe labouring towards him, and guessed that it contained Swift Arrow, though on a very different mission from his own.

The elder raised his bow and set the arrow to its notch. A scream of pain echoed across the lake as the shaft found its mark in the soft flesh of the girl's body. Yet, when the body doubled up, as if in pain, it shrank also, and suddenly from where it had rested there rose into the air a golden-plumed bird. Black Hawk trembled with fear. He knew that this was no ordinary human being: what terrible vengeance might follow his cruel act?

Meanwhile, Swift Arrow had landed and begun to run towards his brother. "What is it?" he cried, for he had not seen Slender Pine bathing by her reedy pool.

"I sought to kill that witch-wife to save your spirit, O my brother," answered Black Hawk. "Indeed, our father was right—she was no human being, for when the arrow touched her she rose into the air and became a bird."

Swift Arrow flung himself down on the ground. "O Slender Pine," he moaned, "why was I not here to save you?"

Black Hawk growled with rage, and springing into his canoe set off for home.

Hours later a gentle hand touched Swift Arrow softly on the shoulder as he lay still stretched on the ground.

"Swift Arrow," said a well-known voice. "'Twas not your seeking, this evil that has come. It is not true that I am a witch-wife, nor that I would have stolen your spirit though I love you: but now we shall never see each other again. Farewell."

The hunter started up but could see nothing. He called out, without obtaining any reply; he ran hither and thither, but could find no one. At last, after a long, long vigil, he, too, was compelled to return.

Cunning Foot received them coldly. He did not question them, nor did they make any remark, and, as if by common consent, the subject dropped.

The news of the brothers' skill travelled far and wide, and many a chief would fain have been allied to the family; but to all their proposals, Cunning Foot returned no answer save a shake of the head. At last, there appeared together two chiefs, brothers, each with a daughter, proposing marriage between the families.

Evidently Cunning Foot approved, for the pipe of peace passed round among them. Then came the exchanges of gifts and compliments, and at last the old man announced that Black Hawk and Swift Arrow would each wed one of the maids. The former agreed with a cold and calculating calm. He knew his own worth and what he would get out of the marriage.

The other shrugged his shoulders. His father had spoken, he must obey, though his heart was cold and dead as a stone for the loss of Slender Pine. No other companion could be like her, so brave and loving. He recalled her words. To marry another woman



meant death. Well, what if it did ! He knew he scarcely cared.

There were to be three days of feasting to celebrate the marriages, and these days were to be made the most splendid memory in the history of the tribes.

The first two days passed satisfactorily in feasting, in contests of skill and strength among the young men, and in games. When the third day's banquet was done, some one observed that Swift Arrow was missing from among the group that was sitting in state under the sheltering arms of a great oak. Guests sought him on every hand, calling up and down the woody groves : but he could not be found.

Cunning Foot's face became a mask of agony and terror. Was the honour of his family to be blackened on this day, in the presence of hundreds of guests ?

" Seek him within his tent," he cried.

Two or three willing young men rushed to the tent, but came out again more quickly than they went in, crying confusedly in high, terrified voices.

Without a word, Cunning Foot rose and went to the tent. There on his blankets lay Swift Arrow apparently asleep, but it was a sleep from which no man could wake him. He had married a woman from among the tribes, therefore Slender Pine had claimed her own. Swift Arrow was dead. ✓

*Slender Pine*

*People are wholly superstitious*

## THE GREAT STONES OF LORMARIAQUER

*mystery* NOWHERE in the world is there such a strange country as Brittany, nowhere could we find such a strange people. The country and the people are alike ; it is impossible to think of one without the other. An air of mystery, of old-time simplicity, broods over both, and as a traveller from the busy modern world wanders into the great open spaces of this land he feels something in his heart drawing him into accord with the glamour around him. This is experienced under the broad light of day among echoing streets of towns or villages ; but, when night has cast her sombre mantle over the shoulders of the hills, there is something more than feeling. A deep sense of the invisible creeps from the darkness and dwells in the heart, claiming union with the most modern life, and welding the past with the present. The long reaches of rock-bound coast, with their wide areas of sand whereon the waves roll and toss ; the silent orchards where the fruit-trees stand wrapped about with shadows ; the long, straight line of some old Roman road guiding the feet of the wayfarer through the gloomy night ; but most especially the old churches themselves, whisper to the soul of a traveller tidings of the weird. Around him, intangible, flit memories of the past ; the air is heavy with the magic of the ages ; he knows that within him is a spirit beating its wings against the bars of physical life to mingle with

*News from the supernatural world.*



other spirits, and that, while he is yet living in the body, he is kin to that vast realm of the unseen which is at once so real and so constant.

If such thoughts and feelings clothe the mind and soul of a modern person, how much more must they have enshrouded the beings of those who lived long years ago. By day and night the people of the past lived amid the reality of things unseen, and illimitable witchery bounded the spirits of man and woman. They believed utterly, as many people still believe partly, in devil possession, that inanimate objects had life and speech, that the lone places of the earth were not empty but inhabited by the supernatural. To know precisely what such people experienced one must go to the less frequented parts of Brittany and talk with those Bretons who have not yet succumbed to the full scepticism of this century. Then one hears and learns things never dreamed of by any dweller in a great modern city.

Several hundred years ago there lived in the country of Morbihan two men who, although friends, were totally dissimilar in disposition. Jacques, the elder of the two, was rich, but mean in spirit; Paul, the younger, was his opposite in all respects, being poor so far as the goods of this world are concerned, but wealthy in that quality of soul which warms the hearts of all who come in contact with it. People respected Jacques for his possessions; they loved Paul for his open, kindly nature. Whatever was the tie between these two nobody could tell. They were free to ignore one another, but nothing separates people so much as forced intimacy. It often happens thus in life: opposites seem to attract, and we are struck by a friendship that to the outward eye seems to be perfectly incongruous. Jacques employed Paul in many a little business, and this brought them together from time to time in a union that was a marvel to all who knew them. The richer man looked down

*inhomogeneous.*

with a thinly veiled contempt upon his less fortunate companion, while Paul, although seeing clearly the avaricious nature of Jacques, would at times forget the meanness and respect the rags and tatters of the poverty-stricken soul lodged in that plump carcass. For Jacques was short and stout, and Paul was tall and powerfully built. People said of them: "The horse does the work, but the coachman always gets the tip."

Now it befell that a certain business matter had taken these two men some little distance from their homes to a place known as the Plain of Lormariaquer. It was one of those wide, open expanses of country met with so frequently in Brittany—devoid of trees, gloomy, mysterious. To the north, as far as eye could reach, stretched an open plain, till it seemed to blend with the sky; southwards it was terminated by a broad stream. Where the plain sloped steeply down to the water stood groups of those famous menhirs—great grey stones rising from the ground and leaning over this way and that as though, ages ago, some vast monster had been playing an antediluvian game of bowls, and, being interrupted in his occupation, had rushed away, leaving his primitive skittles to remain for ever under the changing skies of centuries. There these curious relics of the past still stand, scarred, mossed over, and battered, but enduring stoutly, while many of man's most vaunted creations have crumbled to dust.

Jacques and Paul were delayed over their business. It had to do with the purchase of the apples of an orchard for making cider, and the two men had marvelled at Nature's abundance. The inspection had taken longer than they had contemplated, for the apples lay thick upon the ground about the trees, making a wondrous sight as the deep rings of fruit toned off from rich red near the tree-trunk, through various shades of colour as the apples lay less close



together, till the eye reached the green grass of the orchard. Each tree seemed to rise from a round pattern of ripe fruit. Jacques hugged to his greedy heart the thought of the money that would pour into his coffers. Paul, on the other hand, gloried in the beauty of Nature and the goodness of God to man. ✓

“Pooh!” snorted Jacques, when Paul said the orchard was a paradise. “Paradise means a piece of cheese, a glass of beer, and the one who gets there first.”

Then the farmer had insisted on their taking refreshment. They had chatted together, and Paul had played with the children—as rosy-cheeked as the apples on the grass outside; so that it was already near evening when they turned towards Lormariaquer.

The weather had been brilliantly fine in the earlier part of the day, but now the autumnal sky was overcast, and they could hear the wind sighing in the trees. The farmer and his family came to the gate to bid them farewell, and then stood to watch the strangely-assorted pair march up the road, Jacques rolling from side to side like a heavily laden cog in a choppy sea; Paul with a vertical rise and fall after the manner of an anchored ship riding the waves. As the two passed hurriedly along, great drops of rain began to fall, and from time to time a sheet of summer lightning flashed through the sombre clouds. These floods of dazzling light grew so frequent that, at last, they merged into an outburst of flashing effulgence, mingled with terrific claps of thunder; and now the rain fell in torrents. By this time the companions were near the group of menhirs, and they were fain to take shelter among these masses of stones, and remain awestruck by the spectacle of Nature’s wild mood, pressing their bodies close against the cold column rising between them and the merciless downpour, that, by its slope, partly protected

them from the deluge. So terrified was Jacques that his face turned as grey as the menhir against which they sheltered, and Paul, seeing this, endeavoured to cheer his companion, telling him that God was as near them in this dreadful storm as ever He was in the calmest day.

“ Ah ! ” muttered Jacques, “ it is all very well for you to prattle. God bears no grudge against you. It is my wealth that He detests. All religion professes to condemn the rich man, but it accepts his money freely enough. Pray, my friend ; pray earnestly for the soul of a sinner, that he may be delivered from this awful torment. ”

Paul remained silent. He prayed truly enough, but he felt sad to see this friend of his so upset by the storm. He realized that Jacques, in building up for himself treasures upon earth, had lost his grip upon the realities of eternity. “ What shall it profit a man,” he thought, “ if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ”

The night waxed darker, and the lightning tore the clouds into shreds. Paul stood with bowed head, and the trembling wretch at his side clung miserably to his arm. At length there came a pulse of lightning as though the Devil had cracked his smarting whip over the clouds and made its lash run hither and thither through the writhing masses of vapour. Almost at the same moment a peal of thunder sounded like the crack of doom. In the awesome silence that followed, while Jacques and Paul stood in stunned expectation, there came to their ears the boom of a great voice somewhere overhead : “ That’s good. Thanks to this storm we cannot hear those hateful clocks. ”

As the two men stood thrilled with this strange sound, another voice gave answer : “ This heavy rain will swell the torrent. Remember that tomorrow, at midnight, we must go to wash ourselves





There came to their ears the boom of a great voice.

in the river. Alas ! that this cleansing should come so rarely to me and you. I love the touch of clean, cold water. It does us good, for my heart is dried up by these centuries of years." Then the former voice resumed : " I do not want to quit my resting-place, for I fear lest some harmful being might discover the treasure that we hide. Have you forgotten the Count of Lozère, who, ages ago, carried off part of your wealth ? These creatures could rob us only too easily. It is necessary for us to wait for the hour of midnight, when man lies in lazy sleep, in order that we may safely leave this spot. Alas ! that we are almost blind and deaf. Hark ! It seemed to me not a few minutes ago I heard the sound of a human voice." " You need have no alarm," answered the other ; " you are not likely to hear such sounds amid a storm like this."

Silence fell suddenly upon the two forms cowering at the foot of the menhir. The storm ceased ; the stars shone here and there in the firmament. Jacques glanced at Paul, and without a word the two men stole noiselessly away, turning as they did so to observe the position of the stone mass against which they had rested. Then Paul went back. Going to the menhir he scratched upon it one word—" God." They walked on together without exchanging a word. Then tradition was based on fact. All that talk which had floated about men's ears from childhood—rumours of hidden wealth, of spirits embodied in trees and rocks, evil geniuses brooding over dark places of the earth, a world invisible yet powerfully present—all true ! The old things of the world lived on, still moving at times about the green covering of the earth.

Men's passions are so many roads by which influences travel to their hearts. The next morning Jacques stood at his window. His gaze wandered over the landscape lying once again sweet and fresh



under a sunlit sky. He caught sight in the distance of the plain of Lormariaquer, where he beheld the great stones standing afar off, each with a shadow at its foot. The thought of the previous night, the voices, the great booming tones of the indwellers—was it a dream? Bah! what an ass he had made of himself before that Paul. Fancy losing his wits like that. Perhaps it would be as well to go and see the fellow, and show him that, after all, there was fire in his heart and courage in his veins. It was not well to leave him for too long a time with such a memory. ✓

He went round to Paul's humble abode and found him busy digging in his garden. The poorer man looked up at his rich neighbour's approach, smiled happily, and wished his companion a pleasant good-morning.

Jacques took but scant notice of these salutations. He came at once to his subject. "What are we going to do about this?" he inquired.

"About what?" asked Paul.

"Well, those voices last night—I suppose you heard them?" he snapped testily.

"Oh, I heard them plainly enough," was the reply.

"Then I repeat my question—what are we going to do? There's treasure there, my friend. Are you man enough to come with me to-night to see if we can get some of it? We know God pays, but He does not hand out the money every Saturday!"

Paul made no sign that he heard the taunt implied in these words. His were other thoughts. Friendship would not allow him to leave his companion to hazard any danger alone. If Jacques plunged into this folly, it was clearly his duty to aid him.

"Then you have determined to go?" he asked.

"Am I a fool?" retorted Jacques. "Do you think that I am a man to leave for the ages such a treasure as is clearly hidden there? I am going to-

night ; and, moreover, I am going to dig at the foot of those stones."

Paul glanced at him gravely. " I fancy there will be no need to dig," he said slowly. " We'll take spades, but I believe we shall not have to use them."

" Then you've screwed your courage to the sticking place ? " sneered Jacques.

" Yes," answered Paul ; " if you care to put it like that, I have. But my conscience is the trouble."

The other laughed noisily. " Conscience, my friend," said he, " is a beacon with a changing light."

At nightfall the two men set forth from the village, carrying with them lanterns, spades, and sacks. They proceeded to the plain, and having located the stone by which they had taken shelter, sat down to wait for midnight. Only a few stars glittered in the sky, and the air was heavy. Save for the breathing of the companions, not a sound broke the stillness. Thus the moments passed by, till, afar off, a church clock sounded the hour of twelve.

At the first stroke of the bell, the stone against which they were resting seemed to quiver. All around them, although the cause of it was unseen and incomprehensible, a movement took place, and ominous sounds were heard. Overhead a dull but penetrating voice rumbled through the darkness: " Are you ready ? " And from all around similar sounds replied: " Let us go."

Then, to their bewilderment, Jacques and Paul felt the vast menhir stir and move as though some giant dentist hand were tearing a vast tooth by the roots. Great grey forms loomed through the darkness, and it was only by dint of much agility that the two men avoided the enormous masses as they crashed over the ground, making their way down the slope towards the cleansing water. A silence ensued, as terrifying as the earlier tearing and rending of the soil.



“Hasten,” whispered Jacques. “The lantern—quick!”

Paul lifted his lantern, and together they peered down into the cavity left by the absent menhir. The rays of the light shone upon gold and precious stones. Then Jacques lighted his lamp and ran to a neighbouring pit. In this place to his eyes the treasure seemed greater, and the light fell on big gold cups, rings and torques, on jewels rich and rare. Heaps of gold coin lay carefully piled around these precious objects.

His mind was made up. In his avaricious, greedy spirit there was thought for himself alone. “Stay where you are,” he shouted; “I shall search this pit first.”

Each man descended to his own treasure, and in the flickering light and a profound silence, broken only by the rich chink of coins, worked as he had never worked before. The pale stars looked down upon these two strange pits of earth wherein for a space man toiled for corruptible treasure.

So intent were Jacques and Paul upon their task that they forgot the menhirs; their hands were laved in these golden fountains; they took handfuls of wealth and poured it like water into their sacks, and, as each sack was filled, they lifted it up to the level ground, and turned to fill another.

Suddenly Paul stopped. A heavy scraping sound reached his ears. His heart stood still, and the hairs of his head seemed to bristle. Beads of perspiration broke out upon his brow. His mind rushed back to sanity and remembrance. The great stones! They were returning to their age-old abodes. Washed in the pure waters of Nature, they would stand for another century, immobile, waiting for the moment of relief! The perspiration trickled down his face. He flung his half-filled sack out of the pit’s mouth and began to climb out. As he lay, half in and half out,

his eyes, quickened by fear, beheld amid the darkness vast forms that seemed to bound heavily up the slope. Terrorized, he looked for a moment, then, with an agony beyond description, he cried :

“ Jacques ! Jacques ! Save yourself. The menhirs are here ! ”

It was too late. The wretched Jacques had been so intent upon his task that he had heard nothing. As Paul lay with his hand gripping the grass at the side of his own pit, he saw an enormous mass of stone leap into the air and then descend with cruel precision into its earthy home. A shriek, at first clear in its agony, but afterwards muffled, rent the darkness. But, even as the faint light emerging from the mouth of the pit was suddenly extinguished, so also that bitter cry was suddenly cut short.

Then Paul gazed upwards. Over his own pit a great menhir, more than sixty feet high, was swaying to and fro. The man seemed paralysed. Backwards and forwards swung the mass of stone. All around dull crashes marked the return of other menhirs to their resting-places, and still Paul's stone hesitated at the edge of its home, waiting for the final bound. The man lay half in and half out of his pit, his face turned in agony towards that insensate object looming above him. All the dread and mystery of the ages seemed to be centred in its awful form. Those shadows which, to every Breton, hover inscrutable amid the gloom of night, seemed to take shape with it and were now menacing this frail man lying impotent at their feet. Mystery was manifest ; the unreal became terribly real. Then, in a moment, all the power in Paul's nature asserted itself. With a supreme effort he dragged his body from the cruel lips of the grave, and sank into a swoon.

When Paul opened his eyes the glimmer of dawn was kindling the sky. He gazed around him in the half-light, stunned, bewildered, unable to think or



remember. His eyes dwelt upon the great grey stones standing solemnly about him, but, at first, their shapes had no meaning. Then he caught sight of the sacks, some lying closed, others open, with the gold welling from their lips. Slowly comprehension returned. He moved his head. Just above him, and leaning over his prostrate form, was the great menhir under which he and Jacques had sheltered from the storm. Jacques ! Then the full horror of the night burst from its lurking-place in the labyrinths of the mind, and he remembered.

He arose, trembling, weak with his agony, and crept from the place. Leaving the wealth upon the ground, he tottered rather than walked back to the village. He made straight for the house of the priest, and his last conscious act was to ring the bell at the door. When once more he recovered his senses, it was to see the kindly face of Father Lucien bent over him in deep concern.

" Ah ! my son," said the priest, " that's better. Now drink this," and he placed a glass of generous wine to Paul's lips.

As the warm glow crept over the poor man's body he began to be reassured. Moreover, the peaceful, quiet presence of the priest brought comfort to his soul. Soon he was able to sit up and tell the story of that awful night.

The priest listened gravely. As soon as Paul had finished Father Lucien rose, and said, " Do you feel able to return with me to the place ? "

" Yes, father, quite able."

" Then come," returned the holy man.

He went out to the garden, and taking a big wheelbarrow, came pushing it before him.

" Ah ! " murmured Paul ; " I understand."

They found the sacks just where Paul had left them. Lifting them to the barrow, they piled up the treasure, filling their pockets with the gold that had

fallen on the grass. Nothing was left. Then the priest took out a phial of holy water, and, approaching the menhir under which Jacques lay entombed, consecrated the place and pronounced the sacred words of commitment. They returned at once to the priest's home.

When they arrived there Father Lucien made Paul sit down, and spoke as follows : " My son, it is as by a miracle that you sit here with me. We have had clear proof that those things which many people regard as vague and shadowy dreams have real existence. Your eyes have seen, your ears have heard, your hands have handled. Your poor companion has gone to a wretched fate. Now, I wish you to understand clearly why you, Paul, are sitting here with me, while Jacques lies crushed to death in yonder dreadful pit. As yet you do not fully comprehend. Remember the night before last. Recall the conversation of the menhirs, and repeat to me once more what it was you did just before you came away."

Solemnly crossing himself as he spoke, Paul said : " I scratched upon the menhir the sacred name of God."

Father Lucien continued : " You did, my son, and I saw the word with my own eyes this morning. Now do you understand why you are here ? Remember that with poor Jacques retribution came at once ; but your stone hung swaying at the edge of the pit, thus giving you time to drag yourself away. That single act of religion to which your pious nature prompted you, was your salvation. Dreadful and mysterious as the dark powers of Nature may be to man, yet the Almighty has complete and intimate control over them all. Man ventures upon the stormy breast of Life's ocean, but the religious is always able to clutch the life-line that holds him to the eternal. Go down, therefore, on your knees, and pour out your soul in gratitude for your deliverance from the pit."



Paul did so. Then, when Father Lucien had pronounced a benediction, they began to discuss what should be done with the treasure. They decided that one half should go to the Holy Church, that the whole might be sanctified, and this portion the priest straightway consecrated. The remaining half was to be divided into two—one part to go to the widow of Jacques, and the other to be kept by Paul. Over this portion the priest made the sign of the Cross. When this arrangement was made, and not till then, they partook of food, and then Father Lucien, fetching Jacques' wife, broke the news to her. She was not nearly so much stricken by her loss as they had feared. Moreover, she said that she readily entered into an agreement to keep silence with regard to the treasure, lest weak souls should be led into danger and evil ways.

Father Lucien listened to her in silence. When she had finished he spoke as follows: "Remember how Benevolence and Gratitude met at the gate of Paradise. The holy St. Peter thought that they had come together, and began to praise them and the great things they had done upon earth. But Gratitude stopped him. 'Why,' he said, 'we've never met before this!' You two now have wealth. Be grateful, be benevolent. Trust in the mercy of Heaven. Go, my children, and be comforted in the love of God."

## THE MAGIC STONE

ONE summer afternoon, when Lao Lake glowed with a silken, blue shimmer, Mandarin Weng was seated on a stone by the shore. Though able and energetic, he had, through lack of influence, attained to no more than the Fourth Rank ; and, being now forty years old, could scarcely hope for the Dragon Robe and the Yellow Girdle. This thought did not disturb him, because he had little ambition. Throughout the province he was reputed an easy-going man, who took life as it came, commenting thus on the chances of fortune : “ The rain that merely lays the dust in Tai’s garden washes away Tian’s house.”

Indeed, it was well for Weng that he was supported by philosophy, since trouble had been to him a companion from youth. His only wife had died three months after marriage, and for many years brigand bands had impudently ravaged the district under his charge, knowing that the Imperial authorities disregarded requests for a sufficient garrison.

Weng took pleasure in hunting ; arrows and a powerful bow lay within reach on the ground. To-day, however, unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of the scene, he had not attempted to use them. Near him, a headland covered with camellia trees ran out into the shimmering waters, on which the blossoms shed white and crimson lights. Wild-fowl sailed noiselessly over the lustrous surface ; only the whir of great dragon-flies broke the enchanted stillness.



Suddenly the warm silence was rent by shrill, distressed cries overhead. Looking up, Weng saw a falcon in full chase of a bird whose plumage shone like polished gold. Again and again this bright creature contrived to escape death by nimble turns that baffled the pursuer's heavier flight. Occupied with this struggle, they did not observe the mandarin.

Notching an arrow, he took careful aim, and shot the falcon through the breast. Slowly, on outspread pinions, it circled down to the shingle, while the golden bird flitted joyously out of sight.

The archer approached his quarry, whose yellow eyes were already glazed in death. Weng stooped to examine the great body, covered with bronze-like plumage, and, as he did so, became conscious that, before him, stood a dignified person, wearing robes of the richest green silk. The stranger bowed politely, then began—

“ Pray permit this unassuming individual to thank you for your opportune help, and to congratulate you on your inimitable proficiency. Know that the obscure one who addresses you is Chu Men, a magician of quite ordinary skill. Having, to an unfortunate degree, aroused the hatred of a powerful wizard, his malignant adversary compelled him to assume the shape of a golden bird. In consequence of this really inconvenient, though becoming, disguise, he often incurred danger at the hands of hunters obviously attracted by his elegant appearance. Only the exercise of unusual agility enabled him to escape their pursuit. Thus baffled, his enemy transformed himself into the semblance of a falcon, for the evident purpose of killing this individual; who, thanks to your competent archery, has been delivered from further persecution. It is fortunate for us both that your dexterous shot proved fatal; had the wizard been merely wounded, he would have revenged himself exquisitely. Will you condescend so far as to

accept this token of gratitude? Though the gift is assuredly far from proportionate to your services, it is tolerably alluring in appearance, and also endowed with magic virtues. What these are you must, however, find out for yourself."

He handed the mandarin a small ivory casket, then, before Weng could answer, the magician's shape grew dim, and disappeared completely.

Left to himself, the astonished official examined the gift. In length and breadth it barely covered the palm of his hand, and stood some two inches high. The whole was adorned with finely carved designs. Weng opened it and drew out a stone of quaint and delightful aspect. It was shaped like a mountain, the three crests of which stood out sharp as crystals. In the sides were valleys covered with a green growth, resembling the finest moss. Bright, wavering threads, manifestly cascades and torrents, seamed the tiny gorges, in whose flanks, minute but clearly visible, several openings ran deep into the stone. The lid of the casket bore this inscription: "Those who possess a treasure must not defile it by exposure to the eyes of the vulgar." Holding the stone on his palm, Weng considered it attentively, and thought he saw cloud-like films float round the peaks; but, when he looked more closely, the veils appeared to vanish. The possession of such a marvel made him uneasy. He hastened back to the town, where he found official letters that occupied him till far into the night.

On the morrow, however, and on many a day after, Weng studied the stone; but his leisure hours were snatched, for the brigands, reinforced by bands from Hu Nan, had become so daring that they closely besieged the town. Soon no one could enter or leave in safety; famine threatened the inhabitants and the garrison. It was as much as Weng could do to send a messenger to Nan Chang asking for additional troops. No answer came, and the stores within the town had





He handed the mandarin a small ivory casket.

already dwindled to a few sacks of rice. The position seemed desperate, for the outlaws pressed them closer every day.

To distract his thoughts, the mandarin withdrew, one afternoon, into his garden, and, seated on a bench, examined Chu Men's gift. Removing it from the box, he placed the stone on the marble pavement of the path before him. In the sunshine glittered the tiny peaks, about which, as usual, faint, cloudlike films hovered. Idly, Weng stooped and blew away the delicate vapours. At once he saw the magician standing before him on the path.

Weng rose and bowed ceremoniously. "Your visit is indeed as a lantern in the gloom. May this person inquire to what propitious circumstance such an honour may be ascribed?"

"The explanation is surely self-evident," said Chu Men. "By breathing on the stone till you disperse the clouds that float around its peaks, you can readily summon before you this very insignificant individual. But, to his not altogether blind eyes, it is obvious that your symmetrical countenance exhibits signs of distress. Is there any way in which my somewhat elementary arts may be of service to you?"

Whereupon the overstrung mandarin replied with ill-suppressed irritation—

"How admirable and profound is the axiom that, when a man stands with a noose about his neck, there is but one thing he desires! This town is closely besieged by bold and desperate brigands. We have no stores beyond a few bags of rice; the garrison is reduced to a handful, so that within a few days we must look to meet with an exceedingly distasteful and violent death. It appears, therefore, to the speaker's limited intelligence that a sufficient force of well-equipped soldiers, together with adequate supplies, might offer a solution of the difficulty."



“ Both are at your distinguished disposal,” said Chu Men, and vanished.

Hardly had these pleasing words caressed the ears of Weng, than he observed, issuing from one of the tiny caves, a number of minute golden grains. Even as he looked, these grew rapidly larger, and assumed the shape of horsemen, clothed in tiger skins and gilded lacquer. At the saddle-bow of each hung two weighty sacks. Before ten drops could flow through a water clock, all the garden paths were crowded with the wonderful troopers. At their head, a gigantic captain, in gilt armour and mounted on a powerful stallion, raised his sword to the salute, awaiting orders.

Weng's heart pressed against his ribs for joy. Instantly he summoned the servants of the Yamen, ordering horse and weapons to be ready for him at the garden gate, that opened on the yard behind the barracks. Next, he directed the tiger troopers to ride out on the parade ground and deposit their sacks in the storehouses along the sides. After this, the mandarin, sufficiently primed with hope, put on his armour, and marched out of the town gate, directing the garrison to follow as soon as possible.

The inhabitants, roused by this unwonted bustle, mounted the ramparts in order to observe operations. All the hills round about were patched with enemy tents, whose inmates were plainly aware of danger. Every camp was astir, weapons glittered, cries of alarm and command rang across the sultry air. From the vantage of the walls, those who watched saw the tiger squadron and the soldiers of the garrison divide into four parties, and sweep like waves of flame upon the enemy's lines. Then followed the clash of weapons and the shouts of fighting men ; dust rose above the battle, which, before long, rolled backwards up the hills, and trailed smokewise through the passes between them, till the heavy silence of a summer afternoon settled once more upon the scene. Plainly,

the outlaws had been routed. Grateful worshippers crowded the temples, bells boomed, prayers were chanted, a sluggish mist of incense rose slowly above the upcurving, tiled roofs.

At sundown, a roar of cheers swept round the bastions. Into the town rode Weng at the head of the conquerors, each of whom was burdened with spoil, and led at least one securely bound prisoner. The news spread that all the brigands had been killed or captured, so effective had been the pursuit. Every one of the tiger squadron and of the garrison soldiers was miraculously unscathed. Weng himself had been in danger from the lance of an outlaw chief, but this man had fallen under the sword of the golden leader.

When the captives were securely jailed, the tiger troopers deposited their plunder in the strong room of the Yamen, refusing, in spite of Weng's protests, to retain any portion. That done, they rode into the garden, and ranged themselves along the paths. Their captain asked the mandarin if he had further instructions. Weng courteously answered that all present requirements were fully satisfied, at the same time bidding the officer convey most grateful thanks to Chu Men. The captain promised to do so, then, raising his sword, saluted; whereupon the golden squadron dwindled into little specks of gold, which disappeared swiftly into the magic stone.

That night, the town was given over to feasting, for, apart from the stores brought by the tiger troopers, a great supply of provisions had been found in the brigand camp. Next morning the felons were tried; some punished summarily, others condemned to imprisonment; the rest set free, under severe threats if they resumed their intolerable practices.

Such was the wholesome terror created by this defeat that, within a month, a man might fearlessly leave a bag of taels by the roadside; moreover, thanks to the stir this purging caused throughout the whole



Middle Kingdom, every official exerted himself to some purpose, for fear of losing face.

Meanwhile, the acute mind of Weng was not idle concerning the magic stone. When order was once more established, he retired with the casket to the privacy of his sleeping apartment, and, summoning Chu Men, inquired whether it would be indiscreet to enter the wonderful jewel, and there pay a formal visit to express his gratitude.

“On the contrary,” answered the magician, “the request is such as would be expected of a refined and intelligent mind.”

So saying, he presented Weng with a jade thumb ring, on one side of which curious signs were carved. This he invited the mandarin to slip on his finger, turning the characters towards the palm. Scarcely had Weng complied, than his body, together with its clothing, shrank to such an incredible smallness that the stone towered above him as a mountain of gigantic size. In its base gaped a cavern leading to the interior. Weng entered, and was at once met by fantastic, monstrous figures bearing paper lanterns. They escorted him along passages aglitter with veins of gold, turned by the light into rich arabesques. After a while, the passage widened into a cave lighted by a pale, azure glow. Sides, roof, and floor were of amethyst, which gleamed purple in the unearthly radiance. At the farther end, on a dais of turquoise, several figures were disposed round a table. They were human in shape, save for dragon heads of a truly repellent aspect. All but one wore rich, silken robes, blue and soft as an April heaven. The place of honour was occupied by a person clothed in golden tissue, who announced himself as Chu Men. Courteously indicating a vacant place by his side, the magician continued—

“Undoubtedly it gives this superfluous person extreme pleasure to receive in his unassuming abode

the upright and versatile Weng, to whom the one now addressing you owes life and security. Condescend, illustrious official, to partake of the positively unpalatable food and atrocious rice wine this hovel provides ; after which the progress of Time shall be made endurable by an entertainment not altogether jarring to a fastidious taste."

He clapped his hands. At the signal, monsters in gorgeous livery served a banquet so exquisite that Weng somewhat profanely doubted whether the Imperial table itself could rival it. Between the courses, wine equally choice was handed round. When the banquet was over, dancers, bright as Kiangsi butterflies, performed delightfully. After these had retired, the company fell to capping verses. Weng, who was not without literary skill, seized a brush and wrote—

"Surely from Heaven itself this jewel came,  
For still within it burns celestial flame!"

Chu Men replied—

"There is no jewel like a soul alit  
With Beauty, because Beauty dwells in it."

By degrees an overmastering drowsiness came over Weng, and he rose to take his leave.

"Truly," said the magician, "this person would be intolerably depressed by such a parting, did he not cherish the presumptuous hope that this is only the first of many visits, during which he will be privileged to show the incomparable Weng some rarities, trifling in themselves, yet not devoid of charm for an intelligent curiosity. Ho there ! lanterns !"

As Chu Men clapped his hands, sleep descended on the mandarin. The azure radiance grew dim and faded into darkness.

When he awoke he found himself in his bed. The



morning sun was blazing through the lattice, and glittered on the crests of the magic stone on the floor of the apartment. At the same time a respectful but persistent knocking shook the door panels, for the servants were becoming alarmed at Weng's non-appearance.

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From that day, at discreet intervals that seemed insufferably long, the mandarin penetrated farther into the recesses of the entrancing stone, where many marvels were revealed to him. Thus, among other things, he visited a sumptuous city, built of mother-of-pearl. There, too, he found palaces of porcelain, so fine that the choicest products of Sung appeared pitchers in comparison; also gardens in which the flowers were carved opals and other jewels. Above them glittered fountains that tossed up showers of gems under a magic, golden light. The streets of the city were inhabited by master craftsmen in silk, wood, metals, jade, and equally choice materials; moreover, the thoroughfares were crowded with strange, beautiful beings, gorgeously robed, ambassadors from mysterious regions beyond the sun and moon. Together with Chu Men he ascended the mountain peaks, and discovered springs whose every drop added a day of renewed youth. From the topmost summit, all the Middle Kingdom, and half the barbarous world outside, were plainly visible.

So enchanted was Weng with these wonders that he found his official duties a burden; but, as his virtue did not allow him to procure money by dishonest means, he was not sufficiently rich to resign.

It happened that, on one of the mandarin's visits, Chu Men showed him a treasure vault filled with great jars of money. Looking at these, Weng sighed deeply, and exclaimed—

“Justly has it been said that, though immoderate riches are a snare, yet there is no blessing like a competence.”

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"Your words, most penetrative Weng, are assuredly full of wisdom," answered his host; "nevertheless their special aptness escapes this person's obtuse understanding. He would therefore be gratified by an explanation."

"Surely," retorted Weng with somewhat inelegant irritation, "their meaning is sufficiently obvious! Were your fatuous and tortoise-witted guest not compelled to continue in office, through the distasteful necessity of prolonging his futile existence, he could retire to enjoy unrestrainedly the intellectual pleasure these visits afford him."

"Is that all?" exclaimed Chu Men. "The matter can easily be adjusted, if you will permit the undeserving owner of this profusion to present you with, shall we say, one hundred thousand taels."

"That sum," exclaimed the utterly transported Weng, "would indeed more than suffice, but——"

The mandarin could say no more; already a torpor had dulled his acute perception, and consciousness left him.

On awaking, he found himself in his bed, and at once sat up with a shout of unpolished surprise, for, by the lantern light, he saw, ranged about the room, ten bulky jars abrim with white coin.

Weng passed the remainder of the night counting his treasure. Each jar contained ten thousand silver taels.

Within a month, the mandarin, relieved from office, was installed in a convenient house surrounded by handsome and spacious grounds. Not to excite suspicion, he had taken care to settle in a province distant several hundred li from his former residence. Under the floor of his bedroom he caused a large secret chamber to be built, and here he was at last able to indulge freely in visits to Chu Men; which he did with increasing pleasure.

Nevertheless, such absences, however ingeniously



contrived, soon roused his servants to gossip ; and the mystery attaching to the new and prosperous owner of a delightful estate, attracted the notice of Yang Hi, one of the fifty-six Imperial Censors, a detestably grasping, unscrupulous man. Scenting a pretext for plunder, he determined to act.

One afternoon an armed guard, accompanied by gong-beaters and other officials, appeared at Weng's house. They declared him under arrest, flung him into a litter, and, before evening, he was lodged for the night in the jail of the Censor's residence. Next morning he was brought before Yang Hi and closely questioned with regard to his riches and manner of life. As, for obvious reasons, Weng did not think it prudent to reveal the secret, his answers were declared unsatisfactory, and he was led back to prison, there to await a public trial, when the Censor had collected evidence regarding him.

Weng was deeply dejected. One thing cheered him ; he had contrived to secrete the magic stone in a fold of his robe. About midnight, the Yamen being safely asleep, he took out the gem, set it on the floor in a patch of moonlight, then summoned Chu Men.

The magician appeared, and listened attentively while Weng explained his plight. When the mandarin had finished, Chu Men, after reflecting, said—

“ The problem, though apparently intricate, admits of an easy solution, provided you will allow this fairly competent person to direct your conduct.”

“ Pray do so, superlative Chu Men ! ” answered the other, “ for this utterly incapable individual confesses himself baffled ; so that, even while speaking, he seems to float in the Middle Air.”

Chu Men approached the mandarin, and whispered, “ The mere release of your well-proportioned body presents no difficulty ; but, considering the matter from various angles, it occurs to my doubtless medi-

ocre intelligence that it would be no harder, and certainly more satisfactory, so to arrange proceedings as not only to produce mirth in you, but also to prevent, most effectually, the ill-conditioned Yang Hi from troubling you further ; all this, too, without any inelegant and obtrusive recourse to violence."

"This person's ears are attentive," replied Weng. "He commits himself to your singularly inspired guidance. Pray pursue your harmonious discourse."

"In the first place," said Chu Men, "it will be necessary for the tedious individual now speaking to assume the shape of an unattractive but nevertheless tolerably efficient dragon—a childish task. For fear of eavesdroppers, permit further details to be deposited in your illustrious ear."

Thereupon he approached the mandarin, and continued in an undertone. As the whispering proceeded, Weng's features were disarranged by suppressed laughter, and long before Chu Men had finished his hearer's face was positively convulsed by very unrefined, though silent, mirth.

"And now," said the magician, "night is advancing towards day ; consequently no time should be lost. As a preliminary, this person will lay a spell on the Yamen, so that no one, except the unmentionable Yang Hi, may be wakened by any disturbance."

He muttered three mysterious words ; then, producing some incense, burnt it, and was at once transformed into an exceedingly unprepossessing dragon. At the same time, the cell was filled with a mellow radiance, for there, touched by the moonlight, stood six gigantic soldiers in tiger skins, and armour of gilded lacquer, with swords in their hands, and spiked clubs hanging at their girdles. Two of them bore lighted paper lanterns.

Chu Men made a sign, and the cell door opened. They passed the sentry, seemingly changed to stone, his eyes hard set as crystals ; a few turns through



dim lit corridors brought them to a door. It swung wide, admitting them to a room wherein a man lay asleep on a bed. In him, by the lantern light, they recognized the insupportable Yang Hi.

As they stood silently round the couch, the sleeper awoke, sat up, and would have shouted for help, had not one of the soldiers pressed a sword unostentatiously, but firmly, against the Censor's windpipe. The dragon advanced, ripping the floor mats with his claws and armoured tail. From his crimson throat rumbled words of sinister sound, and at once Yang Hi's rotund body contracted into that of an unusually repulsive ape. At a signal from the dragon, the sword was removed from the creature's throat; whereupon the transformed Censor, with undignified agility, leapt towards the door; but, cumbered by his night garments, now inconveniently ample for his shrunken carcass, he fell headlong on the threshold. With derisive politeness, the dragon held open the door. Yang Hi, however, realizing that his present appearance was ill-suited to a high-placed official, retired to a corner, in which he crouched, glaring at the company.

Chu Men addressed him with stern words—

“O altogether abandoned Yang Hi! as you see, this person's passably proficient art has turned your once impressive body into that of a beast, fitted for no more seemly occupation than to act as a juggler's assistant. It cannot therefore escape your hitherto perspicacious mind that, were you to show yourself in public under your present guise, your appearance would endanger the gravity of even the most well-bred spectator. To prove to your nimble intelligence that you are not the victim of a dream, your frame will now be restored to its former human semblance.”

The dragon again uttered a spell; upon which Yang Hi swelled to his original robe-distending pro-

portions. Chu Men assisted him to a seat on the bed, and continued—

“Listen, Yang Hi! It is transparently clear that a degraded and grasping envy has induced you to plot against the innocent Weng. Know that he is under this one’s special protection, and must in no wise be disturbed. Your purified comprehension will readily grasp that any attempt against him is certain to prove painfully inconvenient, if not fatal, to yourself. The speaker courteously inquires what you propose to do.”

Yang Hi did not hesitate. “The answer to your forcible question appears obvious, even to this opaque-witted individual. He confesses he has fallen into an unpardonably stupid, if not criminal, error respecting the immaculate Weng, and will abide by any just and honourable conditions it may please your clemency to impose.”

“Such a reply,” said the dragon, “is in keeping with the reputation for wisdom enjoyed by the usually sagacious Yang Hi. The terms proposed are as follows :

“Firstly : you shall, to-morrow morning, in open court declare that, after full inquiry, you are convinced the unimpeachable Weng is blameless, and that you have been misinformed.

“In the second place : you shall, immediately after, direct your guards to escort the upright Weng as far as his threshold ; which they shall do with all marks of honour.

“Thirdly : you shall make no future attempts against the peace of the aforesaid Weng ; but, on the contrary, extend to him from this day your powerful protection.

“Fourthly : as a somewhat insufficient recompense for what the magnanimous Weng has suffered at your hands—not to mention all that your offensive and light-fingered menials have insolently abstracted



from his house—you shall present him with one thousand taels of silver.”

“Such conditions,” answered Yang Hi, “seem equitable and moderate to my stunted understanding, and if granted, will be strictly observed. In return, this impossible and outrageous person ventures to hope that the whole unfortunate occurrence will be cancelled from your lenient recollection.”

“Rest assured of that!” replied Chu Men. “Seven seals shall secure its tombstone. And now that the matter has been agreeably settled, it is superfluous to intrude on you any longer. For the purpose of saving your face, and to spare you the humiliating confession that your temporarily clouded reason has been filtered by fear, the compassionate Weng will resume his imprisonment till morning. Prosperity attend your distinguished steps.”

When the mandarin was once more in his cell, he effusively thanked Chu Men, who made light of the service rendered; after which the magician, with many graceful and obliging expressions, vanished, while the soldiers retired into the magic stone.

Next morning, Weng was escorted into the Hall of Judgment. As he entered, the Censor rose and saluted him with deference. Then, in open court, he declared that he had received overwhelming proofs as to the innocence of the accused, who was at once set free.

Escorted by Yang Hi to the very door, Weng passed out into the Yamen yard, where a guard of honour awaited him, together with a sumptuous chair. On the seat lay a heavy, sealed bag of attractive appearance.

In this captivating fashion the mandarin was conveyed to his house. He lived many years free from molestation. True, the mystery of his frequent disappearances caused malicious people to lay charges against him before Yang Hi; but the Censor, far

from listening, punished these informers so severely under the head of slander that the annoyance soon came to an end.

When, in course of nature, Weng changed his world, full of years and tranquillity, his friend and heir, Li Tai, found among the papers of the deceased one in which the events related above, together with the virtues of the Magic Stone, were fully set down. Nevertheless, even the most diligent search failed to trace the jewel ; nor, from that day, has any man discovered what has become of it.



## VASILIA THE VAIN ✕

IT was good to be a Boyar in those old days ; to have power over the lives and properties of people ; to feel that human beings were so many puppets one could move at pleasure ; to know that the very existence of the vassals depended upon the will of their feudal lord. It was pleasant at the time of harvest to see one's serfs come with their dues—corn and wine, or whatever it might be, to offer for their lord's acceptance. To step into one's barns and granaries, and find there wood and grain stored up by the labour of people who were free only to toil and swink because the Boyar decided that they should do so, was a thing to bring comfort to the heart of a man who delighted in the possession of authority.

But if it was good to be such a powerful personage in those old days, it was surely better to be the petted and favoured daughter of such a great lord. If he ruled the peasantry, who ruled him ? Moreover, in ruling him, did not such a daughter rule his people ? He might make up his mind to do this or that, and set to work to accomplish his will ; and then ? Why, just a discontented look, a pout, or a kiss, or a few tears so easily shed, and the whole of the plan could be changed over a glass of wine ! Who then was the real ruler ? Father or daughter ?

Such a Boyar and such a daughter lived hundreds of years ago near Sinaïa, where now stands the old monastery. If any one troubles to visit the place,

he will find that some of the outer buildings are still fit for use ; but it must have been very long since the place hummed with that slow-moving life we associate with the monks of olden days. At this spot three valleys run together amid the slopes of the hills, and the river Prahona, rising not far away, feeds the fertile soil with its pleasant waters. Afar off, cutting the edge of the sky, are the huge naked mountains as jagged as a row of horse teeth ; but near at hand the earth is clothed with verdure. On the hills we can wander among oak trees, beeches, elms, and limes ; in the valleys grow crops of corn ; and the fields are bright with the colours of flowers.

Vasilia, the Boyar's daughter, ruled her father as thoroughly as he controlled his peasants—only, like so many other men, he was not aware of her authority. She had a full measure of that feminine skill which achieves its object without undue display. If any one had told him that his daughter was the head of the house, he would have laughed the idea to scorn. But Vasilia knew that it was so ; and with the exception of the Boyar, every one in the neighbourhood knew of her power. The fact was partly due to her being so much like her dead mother. As a young child, Vasilia had been left entirely to her father's care, for her mother had died of a fever ; and, as the years went by, the girl had grown up to rule men and maids with all the skill of an accomplished wife. Indeed, she had more than a wife's control. By the time she was twenty years of age, her sway was remarkable for its effectiveness.

Nature had blessed her with a high degree of beauty. Her hair was long and flaxen. Her eyes were as blue as cornflowers. Throughout the countryside no girl was to be found as tall and slender as herself, nor one possessed of such willowy grace. To see her at one of the rustic dances was like watching some white lily swaying on its stalk above the heads of the roses





To see her at one of the rustic dances was like watching  
some white lily swaying on its stalk.

dwelling nearer to earth. When the music swept through the smoky rafters and stirred among the old hand-woven tapestries, the sight of the slim figure passing among, but not mingling with, the other women on the outskirts of the dance, made the Boyar draw his hands across his eyes as the memories of earlier days came to his mind. Then as the tones of the Hora, or national dance, rose weird and sad, telling the story of a vanquished people, and the martial step of the men recalled the tread of an army marching to battle, while the women crept so far away that they almost seemed like phantoms against the dark folds of the tapestries, the onlookers could always recognize that commanding but flexible form, and knew that to them it stood for future weal or woe—unless the old Boyar married again. When, at the close, the men rushed to seize the women and triumphantly led them back to the centre of the hall, happy indeed was the hero of the evening to whose lot it fell to touch the hand of the graceful Vasilia. Among those more rustic beauties, gaudy in their brilliant dresses, and glittering with spangles of gilt and silver, this young girl was clearly distinguished by her own inherent grace.

But is it not true that in life a gentle face and slender form often hides an iron will and stubborn purpose? Throughout the land there was no woman, ugly or beautiful, who was so resolved upon having her own way as Vasilia. Yet we shall see that life had a grim lesson for this masterful girl, who was wont to twist her father's purposes round her finger as easily as she twined and untwined one of those soft strands of silk on the spindle of the old loom by the hearth in the hall.

Some distance away on the other side of Sinaia lived a young fellow named Michael. Like so many Roumanians he was a fisherman by trade and was accustomed to bring his spoils to market. Now



Vasilia, engaged upon her duties as housewife, had chanced one fine day to catch sight of the young fisherman as he stood by his basket of silvery fish—sturgeon, salmon, carp, and perch. She had at once noticed his tall strong figure, his handsome features, and the brilliant flash of his dark soft eyes; and although she was a Boyar's daughter, while he was a fisherman, she recked not of that. Are not all of us the children of the good God in Heaven? True love does not recognize man's foolish social barriers. The very next time Vasilia came to Sinaïa she looked again for this fisherman, and, sure enough, there he was standing, according to his custom, close by his basket. So the wilful high-born maiden approached him, and, inquiring the price of his wares, upon her departure, to his surprise, gave him a sum of money much in excess of what he had asked. As time went on this happened so often, that at last Michael became quite used to receiving more than a fixed price for his fish. He was growing rich for a fisherman; but he did not consider the matter at all important. He was an independent sort of youth. Sometimes he would point out that he was being paid too much, but Vasilia would not take back any of the money. Moreover, Michael began to notice that when the price was put into his hand—his hard rough hand—a gentle pressure of the lady's fingers was clearly noticeable. At first he put this down to chance; but it happened so regularly that finally he realized that these light touches were intentional. The knowledge embarrassed him for a while, and his heart swelled with a foolish pride; but later on he assumed an air of superiority mingled somewhat with disdain. He was a young man perfectly able to support himself, and quite indifferent to the honour Vasilia was conferring upon him.

So the buying and selling continued. Vasilia learned that Michael lived alone in a hut not far

from the river some miles out of Sinăia ; that he had no father or mother ; and that apart from his fishing he had but little occupation. Believing that he was hers to make or mar, so far as love was concerned, the Boyar's daughter now desired to see what sort of figure he would cut in fashionable clothes. One day, therefore, when she came to the market, she gave him a sufficient sum of money and instructed him to purchase the dress of a noble, bidding him meet her on an appointed day at a spot not far from his own abode. When they met, she was so charmed with his appearance and address, that there and then, without consulting her father, she told Michael that, if he would care to marry her, she was willing to be his wife. He blushed and hung his head sheepishly. He was single. He did not desire marriage. She might be in love with him, but, so far, his heart was all his own. Vasilia was urgent in the matter. She pointed out to him the advantages that would be his ; and at last, with a vision of lordship before his rustic eyes, Michael yielded, and sent the lady happily away to break the news to her father, the Boyar. In other lands there might have been considerable opposition from a parent ; moreover, in our land of Roumania, sociable as our upper classes may be, with less indulgent fathers or less masterful daughters, obstacles might well have arisen. But this noble thought only of his child's happiness, and, without realizing it, he had come to submit to her will rather than enforce his own ; and seeing that she was bent upon this marriage, and learning that she had loved Michael for a long time, he yielded, and gave his consent to the union.

Then the preparations for the wedding, and the excitement among the tenants of the old Boyar ! Streams were plundered for their scaly harvests, ovens were hot day and night baking joints and pastry for the banquet ; cellars were searched for the choicest



wines; and the guest-hall was scoured for the ceremony, where the bride, having been pursued and captured by the bridegroom, would be carried to the priest for him to join their hands in wedlock. Every charm and every spell that could possibly be employed against the presence of evil spirits was thought of; and tangible objects of that nature were placed in their proper positions so as to be thoroughly effective. As there would be so much company and so much dancing, special care was paid to the old piles on which the floor was raised above the earth. And of course all the womenfolk of the establishment were busy plying their needles to make the necessary garments and dresses for the bride and for themselves, and at the same time discussing every conceivable subject connected with the approaching ceremony and the days that would follow. To listen outside the room where they all sat and worked was like standing near some enormous hive in the height of summer.

Vasilia, by convenient and suitable means, sent her future husband a sum of gold with close instructions to purchase befitting attire for the wedding feast. It was now the season of our long and lovely autumn, when days are fine and nights mild, and Nature dons her most glorious dress. That year it seemed as though she and man were conspiring to bedeck themselves for the wedding day of Vasilia, the lovely daughter of the Boyar. Michael purchased a suit of dark red velvet, richly ornamented with gold and silver embroidery. His brocaded vest was a glory in itself, and the frills of his knee-breeches were of the richest, broadest lace. Truly, here was a change in the life of a young fisherman! Could he pass through all this fortune and escape without danger? We shall see.

The day arrived, soft, mellow, and golden. The guests assembled—tall stalwart men, and beauteous

women bedight with richly coloured garments of silk, and wool, and thread, fluttering with lace and resplendent with those wonderful spangles they loved so greatly, gathered together to witness the nuptials of the fair Vasilia. All around one could see the flashing eyes of the girls, and hear their sweet, tuneful voices, as they stood chatting and laughing in merry groups. Against the sombre background of the hand-worked tapestries on the walls these little companies of gaily dressed women stood out like clusters of bright flowers against the brown earth. Soft cadences of music touched the heart, adding that hint of man's higher nature which on all occasions it is good for us to remember and realize. When the priest with his assistants arrived at the homestead, every one was attuned to the solemn yet joyful spirit of the approaching ceremony.

Well, they were married with all the quaint ceremony of our country. Just a hint of the old custom of the flight of the bride and her capture by her man, blended with the rites of the Church; just a little music mingled with the earnest prayers and exhortation; and then the two stood forth as man and wife for weal or woe. All the guests followed the Boyar and the newly married couple to the banquet, and the real merriment began. The table was heaped up with dishes of every kind, for the land was fertile and the rivers stocked with fish of choice description. Wine flowed freely. Jokes flew round the board. One old farmer, a tenant of the Boyar, told how he knew of a Jew who saved himself from the expense of putting a tombstone over his wife's grave by hanging up one of his business signs with the words: "Rebecca, the deceased wife of the above fish merchant, lies buried beneath this board." Loud shouts of laughter greeted this sally, and other guests hastened to cap the story with further illustrations of the business acumen of the Israelites. Another farmer told a good tale about a



priest who was baptizing a child, and, when taking the infant from its mother's arms, did it so awkwardly as to turn the child completely round, so that the holy water was sprinkled on its feet instead of its brow. Just as he was saying "I baptize thee in the name . . ." the child began to cry in the place where the priest supposed its feet to be, and he was so confused that he dropped the infant in the font. A third told a jest of a mother-in-law who always slept in her spectacles so that she might see her son-in-law suffer while she dreamed. Tales of the cunning of gipsies followed, and each tale was greeted with heartfelt laughter, and drunk down with copious draughts of wine ; till, when the moment arrived for the significant act of the bridegroom and bride, all the company was flushed and ripe for the least trifle to set the laughter again rippling round the table.

Servants approached, and placed before the gold-embroidered Michael a lightly boiled egg. The young couple were to share this together. The youth was just on the point of dipping his piece of bread into the yolk, when Vasilia pushed his hand aside.

"Stay," quoth she in a commanding voice. "It is my right to eat first, for I am the daughter of a Boyar, while you are but a fisherman."

As these words left her lips there was a stir among the guests. Michael had lived an obscure sort of life, and, as we have seen, his home was far on the other side of Sinaïa. If, as a fisherman, he had been known by sight to some of these comfortable farmers and their wives, his rich attire was sufficient in itself to disguise his identity. "A fisherman ! Vasilia, the daughter of their lord, married to a fisherman !" A gasp of surprise rose from every throat ; and all eyes were fixed upon Michael. What would he do—this fisherman ?

For a few moments he sat with downcast eyes. Then, arising with simple dignity, he walked slowly

away from the now silent guests, and moving towards the door, disappeared from their view. Confusion ensued. Vasilia sat with the broken egg before her. Her father leaned forward and covered his face with his hands. People whispered to one another. The servants, seeing the banquet arrested, stood bewildered. But the priest, in no uncertain manner, rose from his chair, and turning towards Vasilia asked one simple question: "What then was the meaning of your vow?" After a pause he added: "Until he returns and you submit there can be no happiness for this household, or for those who desire its welfare. You have chosen your lot, and your duty is to obey. Unhappy is that house where woman is always seeking for the mastery." Then he went from the hall in search of Michael.

But the bridegroom had disappeared. Amid the confused and hurried drama, no one had noticed what direction he had taken. All eyes had been fixed on Vasilia. A bride is always the centre of observation. Well for her if by her subsequent conduct she is able to retain the respectful and admiring gaze of those around her.

Vasilia, upon learning of the complete disappearance of her lord, burst into tears. She had genuinely loved Michael. Her heart had been set upon possessing him. She had not estimated aright his manly independence of character. She might have read in those dark penetrating eyes the existence of a strength which, once employed in the service of those meriting honour, would never fail as long as life endured. But she had seen only the humble and loyal tribute of a clown. Here was a man who would be a docile husband, subordinate to her will, and serviceable as need arose. Perhaps, like many women, she had thought of a husband as a kind of two-legged lapdog, ready to beg on occasion for sugar dainties! Who knows? But now stern and rugged independence



had grasped this prospective puppet in its hands, and, for the sake of liberty and self-respect, had drawn him away from luxury and splendour, and the love that sought to bind him in silken but disgraceful fetters. Where was Michael ?

So Vasilia wept through the remainder of that day and long into the night, till at last, exhausted by tears, she sank into a deep slumber. Upon awaking, her mind at once reviewed the past, and a kind of pride refused to allow her to remain among her kinsfolk and servants as a neglected wife. Her vanity was too great to endure such a rebuff. She arose, took money in her purse, and, having dressed herself in suitable attire, crept from the house in the early dawn, determined to find this youth and endeavour, by means of her feminine wiles, to lure him back to her side. After all, some sort of a compromise would appeal to him if only she could present the matter aright ; and, in course of time, she might obtain by slower and less obvious methods what she had somewhat imprudently revealed at the wedding feast. She would bring Michael to his senses. All that was necessary was to present her compelling beauty before him.

Day followed day and still her search continued. She visited town and village, but all her inquiries failed to discover any trace of Michael's whereabouts. He had not returned to his hut or his usual occupation. Then at last, one day, far away from her home at Sinaïa, she learned that a young fellow answering to his description had been seen tramping towards a certain town. She resolved to follow this clue, and to her delight she was able to do so. Michael, as we have said, was a striking and handsome youth, and many a woman had observed him with admiring eyes. At last Vasilia, after several months' wandering, found her Michael. He was employed as a servant at an inn. She waited her opportunity, and one day con-

fronted him as he passed along a street. He looked steadily at her, and then turned away his head. Vasilia followed him, imploring him to hearken to her. He made no sign that he knew her. Pains-taking in her efforts, to the deep-interest of all the womenfolk in the streets, she pursued Michael to the inn where he was employed, and even went after him into the building. Here she encountered the landlord of the place, who, seeing her pestering his servant, asked her bluntly what on earth she meant by her tricks? Then he added, with a clownish laugh, "Anyhow, you are only wasting your time. You'll never get an answer from him: he's as dumb as a tombstone."

"Nonsense!" snapped Vasilia. "Dumb! My husband dumb. He could speak plainly enough when we met last."

"I don't know anything about that," replied the man; "but ever since he has been with us he has never spoken one word. I tell you he's dumb."

Vasilia stood irresolute. What could she do? Michael was bound to serve the guests. There was clearly no sympathy whatever to be found in this place. Should she fetch her father or the priest? Then she reflected that, if she left Michael, he would at once in his obstinacy go elsewhere, and the search would have to begin anew.

She spoke again: "I shall stay in this inn, and if I don't get him to speak in three days, I'll be hanged for it."

At these words a laugh went up, the landlord leading the chorus with a tremendous guffaw. Michael had gone about his duties by this time, and did not hear her oath.

"Come!" said the landlord at last. "We'll make that a sure thing. As luck will have it, here's the Prefect arrived just in time. Now, my young woman, just repeat that remark. You seem to be in earnest, and we have plenty of witnesses. You have been



pert enough with me. You do not choose to believe a plain truth, so we'll take you at your word. What did you say ? ”

Vasilia was deeply chagrined by the man's insolent manner. In a low but resentful voice she repeated : “ If I don't make him speak in three days, I'll be hanged for it.”

“ Take down those words, Prefect,” insisted the landlord. “ Take them down in clear writing. Here's Matthias Besarab and Stephen Lufu who will stand as witnesses. We will see if an impudent hussy like this can come and beard me in my own inn, and tell me to my face that I am a liar.”

And so the thing was done. In a country where a Prefect has every power to enforce all laws over his district, the wretched Vasilia was driven to take the oath upon what had left her mouth as a more or less idle remark.

Even then she did not realize the gravity of her situation. She took a room in the inn, and set herself to her task. As long as she did not interrupt Michael at his duties the landlord gave her free leave to do her best to make the dumb man speak. On the first day, as soon as opportunity came, she approached her husband, and implored him to speak to her. She expressed her deep sorrow for what had occurred. She told him she had never wished to disgrace him in the eyes of the guests. “ I am deeply sorry, Michael,” she said tearfully ; “ but I implore you to say a word of pity.” And she turned her beautiful blue eyes pleadingly towards him. A woman never realizes till she has driven a man to extremity the depth and strength of the determination lying rooted in his nature. The privilege of sex far too often blinds her to the truth.

Not a word came from Michael's lips. He looked her steadily through and through ; then he turned away with disdain, and left her standing alone.

Thus one of the fateful days had gone. But Vasilia did not despair. The next evening, the moment Michael was at liberty, she again addressed herself to the task. This time she allowed her vexation to show itself somewhat. She upbraided him with his desertion. She recalled, as a woman can so easily do, some of the words of love he had uttered. She reflected upon his ingratitude in leaving her, Vasilia, who had raised him from the position of a humble fisherman. Partly this was due to her vexation; partly it was cunning to sting him into utterance. Yet, whatever prompted her tongue, her words made no difference. Stolidly Michael stood gazing at her till she had ended. When she attempted to fling her arms around him, he put her away from him with serious dignity, and, at last, strode from her as silent as ever. From the doorway came the mocking laugh of the landlord. Vasilia crept weeping to her apartment.

The third and last day arrived. Again and again the unhappy woman assailed Michael with fruitless attempts to get him to speak. The landlord made no objection, for he knew the time was drawing to a close. Morning, noon, and night saw her at her task, but her husband made not the least response. Why should he? He knew nothing of the registration of the oath. He saw in her simply a cunning woman, who, spoiled by her upbringing, was filled with the vanity of her sex, and who, for the sake of getting her own way, would insult a man to his face in the presence of assembled guests. The love that in private or in public can make a mock of the professed object of its adoration is not true love. Better to be a dumb man waiting on people at an inn than the gilded husband of a woman like that. Better to be an outcast by the roadside than the despised master of a contemptuous household. Thus Michael spoke no word.

The third day passed and the landlord sent for the Prefect. He came, and with a serious air told Vasilia



to get ready to accompany him to the Prefecture. Outside the inn a conveyance was waiting, attended by silent men-at-arms. The sight of them first gave Vasilia a realization of the seriousness of her position. She addressed a question to the Prefect, but he made no reply at the moment; however, when she was taken from the vehicle and lodged in a strong room, he told her that the next day she must die. Then the wretched girl comprehended what she had done. She protested that hers were idle words. The Prefect told her that she had repeated them in the presence of witnesses. She begged that her father might be fetched. The reply was that the time was too short. Nothing that Vasilia could say or do changed in one degree the stern attitude of law, which at all times and in all countries is cruel and merciless, but in her country at that age was inhuman and savage.

During the night Vasilia heard the men at work erecting her scaffold. Her hands could not shut out the horrid sounds from her ears. Sleep fled and pale dawn found her as grey as the leaden sky overhead. At seven in the morning she was led out to die. A crowd of people was assembled, and the miserable woman looked in vain for a sign of mercy. Then her beseeching eyes lit upon the figures of the landlord and Michael. The landlord's face wore an expression of triumph. Michael returned her glance, but shook his head. A bitter cry of despair and anguish burst from her parched throat, and she understood that, as far as earth was concerned, her last hour had come. A priest drew near, and, addressing her, asked if she felt she was fit to die. She clung desperately to him, and at last had to be torn away by force. Then her hands were tied together. The executioner prepared to take the first steps. Already the populace was holding its breath in anticipation of the dreadful end, when a voice of authority cried, "Stop!" Every one turned to see who had issued this command. They

saw Michael at the foot of the scaffold. He ascended the ladder, and going up to Vasilia put his arm round her waist.

“This woman,” he said, “is my wife. When she said that I was not dumb she spoke the truth, as you can hear. But she knows now that a grave and serious lesson was necessary to curb that spirit of vanity which hitherto has ruled her life. That lesson has been given. Never again will she attempt to set her authority over mine. Nor truly do I desire to set mine over hers. We shall return now to our abode, and in perfect equality live the rest of our days. I have saved her life, and she will never forget it.”

Vasilia was released, and very humbly she placed her hand in that of Michael, who led her away. They returned to the Boyar's dwelling, and it is said that, as the years passed by, they grew more and more devoted to each other. Nowhere in the whole of Roumania was there a more humble or obedient wife than Vasilia the Boyar's daughter.



## THE TROLL'S REVENGE

ONCE upon a time, in the district of Hellingdal, lived one Olaf Knudsen, a farmer, who owned full half of Arne valley ; a large holding, but barren, save for a meadow tract along the torrent that brawled southwards on its way to Tyre Fiord. Unfortunately this land was strewn with some of the large, grass-covered mounds, known in Norway as Troll hills. No one dared approach them, for they belonged to one of the Earthmen, creatures unfriendly to human beings, so that it is dangerous to have dealings with them ; much more so to disturb their property.

Knudsen had several lusty children, and found it a hard struggle to live. Many a time, when he harvested his meagre crops, or drove his herds down from the upland pastures, he would pause to look enviously on the long green strip of meadow land, in which he did not dare so much as let his cattle graze. The matter weighed on his mind, and gave him no peace. At last, after anxious pondering, one Saturday afternoon Knudsen walked down to Laven village, near which lived Hedda Stor, a noted wise woman.

He found the hag at home, cowering over a fire of pine logs. Knudsen told her he had come for advice, and, at the sight of the plump fowl the farmer had brought as a fee, she received him with smiles, greedily felt the bird, and fixing her weasel eyes on Knudsen, inquired his business.

Thereupon he explained his trouble to the witch, asking her whether she thought it likely that the Troll would, for a consideration, allow the meadow land to be tilled.

The old woman considered awhile, then replied that she could not answer one way or another. Still, no harm could be done by laying the offer before the Earthman. She also gave Knudsen a curious leaf, telling him that, if on St. John's Eve he rubbed his eyelids with the juice, he would be able to see inside the Troll hills, and thus find an occasion of speaking with their owner. Against one thing she particularly warned him : he must treat the Earthman with great courtesy, otherwise harm would follow.

Knudsen thanked the witch, and set off homewards more cheerily than he had come. As he walked up the dales in the moonlight, it seemed to him that his fortune was already made.

On the next Eve of St. John the farmer, sprucely dressed, left his soeter\* after sundown, and hurried along the torrent. Valley and mountain lay bleached by the colourless transparency of a northern mid-summer night, through which Knudsen thought he saw unearthly bale-fires gleaming, here and there, on the crags. He would gladly have given up the venture, but, being a resolute fellow, continued till he stood by the largest of the grass-covered mounds. After some hesitation, he smeared his eyelids with the juice of the magic leaf.

At once every hillock stood open before him, like brown caves overarched with green. One of the largest rose close to Knudsen, and in it, on a horse skull, sat a tiny, withered man, wearing a leathern suit. His right hand held a silver tankard, out of which he drank, staring the while at the brands aglow on a rudely fashioned hearth, for at all seasons Earthmen dearly love a fire.

\* Farm.



Knudsen approached, coughing discreetly, till the Troll looked up. Thereupon the farmer in his politest manner said—

“ Good-evening, your worship, and many of them ! ”

“ The same to you, Olaf Knudsen ! ” came the answer. “ We have long been neighbours, though not acquaintances.” Then, eyeing the farmer shrewdly, he continued, “ And pray, what business has led you to call on me at this time of night ? This is the first human visitor I have had for threescore and odd years. Aye, it is all that time ago since your great-grandfather, Torwald, consulted me about a cattle murrain. A decent soul he was ; of a kind, unfortunately, rare among human beings. Quite a well-disposed, neighbourly creature ; I was glad to help him.”

“ Well, sir,” said Knudsen, “ not to waste your time, let me say that I have long been thinking it is a real pity all this fine land of yours should lie fallow ; and I wish to ask whether you would care to come to an understanding with me on the matter. If you would—for a consideration of course—allow me to till your property, it seems to me we should both be better off.”

“ Ha ! ” said the Troll, pricking up his leathery ears. “ That is very well and plainly put ; straightforward and to the point. Now, regarding this consideration you speak of, what terms would you suggest ? ”

“ Why, these, your honour,” rejoined Knudsen. “ If you are agreeable, the land shall be ploughed up, except one or two mounds you may wish to keep for yourself. All crops are to be shared equally in this fashion. The first year, I take everything above ground, and you what is below. The next season let my share be what is under the surface, yours what is above ; and so on, turn and turn about. How does that strike you ? ”

“ I like the idea quite well,” cried the Troll, slapping

his slender thighs. "If the bargain is honourably kept, it seems a fair offer. Suppose I agreed, when would you care to start?"

"As soon as you like," answered Knudsen. "And the sooner the better, say I. Right away, unless you object."

"So be it," said the Troll. "With regard to the hills, I am not unreasonable. Let me keep this mound; that will be sufficient. Would it inconvenience you to spare it?"

"Not at all," replied the delighted Knudsen, whose eyes were aglitter with joy in the meanly cunning plan he had devised.

"One word," broke in the Troll. "The best of friends may disagree. Shall we say that the arrangement is to stand for seven years only, unless we both see fit to renew it?"

"As you will," assented the farmer. "I find your honour is a rare hand at a deal."

"Done with you!" shouted the simple Earthman. "I believe you to be an honest fellow, one after my own heart. You shall start at once. What is more, I'll give you a hand with the work; and now let us drink to the bargain."

He passed his tankard to Knudsen, who pledged the Troll in a liquor sweet, but so powerful that his senses reeled while he swallowed it. His brain was washed as by a wave of fire, and he lost consciousness.

When he came to, he was sitting propped against an elf hill, under a cheerful sun that flooded the dale with warm light.

"That little leather jacket is a rare drinker," thought Knudsen, "but simpler than a babe," and he chuckled maliciously as he walked home across the fields.

Next day the farmer set to work, and soon found that the Troll was better than his word; for every night he performed the labour of twenty men. All the hills save one were levelled; the land ploughed



and laid under oats. By August, the tract was a strip of waving gold, of which Knudsen took the grain and straw ; the Earthman received nothing but roots.

The next crop was carrots and turnips, which thrived amazingly. Knudsen sold them for a wagon-load of silver ; the Troll had the leaves, and declared himself delighted with such a stock of green food for himself and his kin, who lived in the hills round about.

So matters went on during six years ; by which time Knudsen was the richest man in Hellingdal, because, as we have said, the Troll was better than a score of farm hands, and did not ask for wages.

But though the arrangement seemed to work smoothly neither of the parties was quite content. As often happens, wealth had increased the farmer's greed, so that he began to covet the Troll's small share of the crops. He was, therefore, all the more unpleasantly startled when one day, walking by the torrent, he saw the Earthman perched like a huge brown cricket on the top of the surviving mound.

The Troll hailed Knudsen, and said, " Hark you, friend ! Though I have no complaint against you, I wish to tell you that next year, when our agreement comes to an end, it must be renewed on different terms : which are, that we allot the shares of the crop by spinning a coin ; and for this reason. I have already such a store of roots that I shall require no other fuel for twenty years. Moreover, carrot and turnip tops are, in the long run, wearisome diet to any but goats or rabbits. What do you say ? "

Knudsen was furious ; prudence, however, compelled him to agree politely, and they parted good friends.

As the farmer returned home, he was full of evil designs against the Troll. That night, and many another, he could not sleep for thinking how he could outwit his partner. In the end he conceived a plan, which he at once prepared to carry out.

When the winter snows melted, workmen came to the northern end of the Troll's land, not far from the bleak road that seams the valley. The ground was levelled and drained, after which came a number of carts bearing stone, beams, and mortar. The sharp spring air rang with the clink of trowels, the burring of saws, the thud of hammers. Before summer was out, a large building of cold, raw stone rose within a walled enclosure. Not far from it was a house with a garth, also girdled with masonry.

This unusual noise and bustle roused the Troll's curiosity. Often, after dark, belated wayfarers observed an elvish figure creeping about the new buildings ; and on moonlit nights Knudsen, posted at one of the farm windows, uneasily spied the Earthman, whom he took special pains to avoid. Late one afternoon, however, passing the mound, he was hailed by the Troll, who inquired what the great building and its neighbour might be.

"The big one, your honour?" replied Knudsen. "Why, that is my new granary, to be sure! Thanks to your kindness, I have not enough room for all the crops in the barns down at my place. The smaller building is a house for my bailiff, who now lives yonder at Helling village, a plaguy long walk. I hope you do not object!"

"Oh dear, no!" cried the other. "Quite the contrary; I am delighted to learn you are doing so well. But, forgive my curiosity, what is that little tower on the top of the barn?"

"Tower, your worship? Why, that is where I shall put the tackle for the hoist. You see, such a contrivance comes in useful if you want to haul up heavy sacks."

"Splendid!" exclaimed the little man. "I ought to have something of the kind myself, especially as, in future, I hope to get together a good store of oats. We Earth People are too old-fashioned, and it would





He passed his tankard to Knudsen.

not be amiss if we tried to keep up with the times. When the machine is working, you will, perhaps, let me see it ! ”

“ Oh, to be sure,” answered Knudsen. “ I shall be delighted to show you everything ! ”

With that they parted, and the Troll retired into his mound well content.

But, one fine morning, just before harvest time, a strange procession came up the valley : men, women, children, and, at their head, a grave man in formal black.

The sound of so many tramping feet reached the Troll underground, and he wondered what it meant. Suddenly, a dreadful, booming noise rang out overhead ; a deep, slow note, which rolled from height to height. The Earthman recognized it at once ; it was the sound of a bell.

Now, you must know that Trolls and their kind cannot abide the music of church bells. Sick, and so dizzy that he could hardly stand, the little fellow groped his way up into the sunshine. As he came out into the warm light, the full sound struck his ears, which he covered, moaning in agony, while he fled, pursued by the brazen din. Knudsen, peeping between the louvre boards of the bell loft, joyously watched the Earthman’s flight.

Mile after mile up valley sped the Troll ; not till he had crossed the range into a neighbouring dale did he stop, and throw himself panting on the grass of the pastures. He guessed the nature of the mean trick played on him, and swore revenge against his enemy. But this was no easy business. Whenever the Earthman ventured into Hellingdal, the dreadful sound drove him back ; because, by Knudsen’s orders, the bell rang four times a day, and thrice during the hours of darkness. It was as much as the wanderer could do to reach his former home and remove his goods under cover of night. He was only just in time, for,



within a week of the Troll's flight, Knudsen carried the crop, and ploughed in the stubble to enrich the soil, so that it should yield even more heavily. He also levelled the last remaining mound, to destroy every trace of the Earthman's ownership.

The farmer was now so prosperous that he could afford to keep a parson at the manse ; who, besides performing all usual duties, was expected to see that the bell rang at regular intervals.

But, although Knudsen was now sole owner of the land and of what it yielded, he found he had lost by the business, because now it was necessary to hire at least twenty more labourers, and, for these, cottages must be provided at his expense.

Within the year a small village had sprung up round the church, and people spoke admiringly of the farmer's achievement. This was small consolation to the rogue, who, counting costs, often wished the past undone, though he was hardened enough not to be ashamed of the shabby fashion in which he had dealt with the Troll.

Three years after, Lota, his eldest child, became engaged to the son of a farmer who had large holdings in Gausdal, twenty miles away. It was an unusually fine match, but Knudsen now passed for such a substantial man that the girl could pick and choose among her suitors. These were many, since, as envy whispered, the gold of Lota's thick plaits was enhanced by the glitter of her dowry. They fixed the wedding for September, immediately after the crops had been carried.

That year everything prospered with Knudsen ; so amazingly, indeed, that, if he had ever felt any qualms, they were overlaid by the splendour of the harvest that waved along the torrent.

One evening late in August, as people afterwards discovered, the Troll was seated among cranberry bushes, hard by the main road where it crosses the

divide above Hellingdal. In the luminous pallor of the sky above the massive fells, shone a great, rose-coloured moon, flushing the snowy dome of Skaglostind peak. The warm air was sweet with the scent of hillsides baked by the long summer day, but the Troll had little heart for such pleasant things. Anger and homesickness rankled like a festering wound.

As he sat there moodily, two men came along the road from opposite directions, singing lustily in the mountain stillness. They met near his lurking-place, and hailed each other.

"Good-evening, comrade!" said one. "It is a mighty time since I have had speech with you!"

"True enough," came the answer, "but it will not be long before we forgather again, if, as I have heard, like me, you have been asked to Lota Knudsen's wedding on the fifteenth of September."

"That is so," replied the other, "and they do say that food as well as drink will be of the best, and no stint of either. Lord! how some men thrive! I remember the days when Olaf Knudsen was hard put to it to feed his own family, let alone friends. To be sure, there are some odd tales about him and his sudden riches!"

"That is as it may be," was the rejoinder, "but when good fare is to be had free, I, for one, never inquire how it got on the board. A pleasant walk to you; we will drink together on the fifteenth."

When the two were out of hearing, the Troll broke cover, and ran wildly hither and thither upon the hillside, leaping and waving his arms, so that his shadow flitted, restless as a bat's, on the moon-washed slopes. For hours he roamed, till, under the thinning stars, he came to the top of a ridge, from which he could see Lake Oe, a long blade of water, shining like a giant's broadsword in the valley below. The Troll perched himself on a pinnacle of rock, and sat motionless, with the wind plucking at his cloak; but, when



the sun fired the eastern heights, he rose suddenly, gave a shout of fierce joy, then raced downhill, capering and snapping his fingers as if possessed by a strange, sinister mirth.

On the appointed morning, the marriage took place. Most of the country folk attended, and, when it was over, all returned to the farm in procession. First came half a dozen fiddlers and two clarinets, then the bridegroom arming Lota, who was magnificent in her crown of silver gilt, velvet bodice, and stiff, pleated skirts. After them walked the best man, the bridesmaids, the parents, the parson, and a long train of guests ; the women proud of their finery, the men ill at ease in Sunday black, embroidered with coloured patterns down the chest. So, in much state, they wound slowly across the sultry fields ; and, as they went, before them, out of the stubble into the blue, flashed many a bird, scared by the vigorous music.

Down at the soeter, the great barn, bright with flowers and greenery, stood open-doored to receive them ; all sat down at long tables plentifully spread, and fell to with a great clatter of knives, clinking of tankards, and drinking of healths.

It was late in the afternoon, and the air already keen, before the company rose. Every one lent a hand in clearing and removing the tables. The huge barn was brilliantly lit by candles set in sconces round the walls. At the upper end were two boards well supplied with drinks ; and between them stood a massive table, on which the musicians sat with stoups of good liquor under their chairs. They struck up a lively dance measure. Elbows up, instruments tucked beneath their chins, the fiddlers plied their bows frantically ; well seconded by the clarinet players, whose purple cheeks were puffed up to the eyes behind the wailing wood. Round and round swept the couples, feet stamped, dust rose, lights wavered ; now and again some player, descending

from the table, led a noisy procession of dancers round the floor.

So the hours went by. Lota's new home was a long drive down the dale, therefore she and her husband were to sleep at the farm that night. The bride passed from hand to hand, for all were eager for the honour of a turn with her. She obliged them with a good grace, while the bridegroom made the best of other partners. By the musicians' table, thumbs in waistcoat pockets, stood Olaf Knudsen, and near him his wife, both contentedly watching the scene.

It was after midnight ; a dance had just come to an end, when a noise was heard at the door, and a lad made his way up to Knudsen. This newcomer was an ungainly, half-witted youth, known as "Silly Peter," who earned a poor livelihood by running errands and such like.

"Aye ! aye !" said the farmer ; "and from whom may this be ?"

"I do not know, master," was the reply. "It was handed me an hour ago, on the Aurdal road, by a gentleman, who said it was very important, and gave me a piece of white money for my trouble. He also told me he thought, maybe, you would add something more, seeing that the letter contained a gift for Miss Lota that was ; so you were bound to be pleased."

"Why !" answered Knudsen, "that remains to be seen ! But what is the meaning of this ? Have you been trying to open it, meddlesome scarecrow ? The seal is all wet !"

"Not I, sir !" babbled Peter. "I swear I never thought of such a thing ; but it is a queer letter, that it is ; cold and heavy as lead !"

All the guests had by this time gathered round them.

Knudsen eyed the envelope, which was odd-looking, to be sure, for it was chill, moist, and heavy.



"Is there a fish inside it?" laughed the farmer, though he felt unaccountably disturbed. "Here, wife, lend me a corner of your apron to dry the thing!"

He wiped the flap, but to no purpose; a clammy ooze still glistened around the seal.

"Plague on it!" exclaimed Knudsen. "What fool's trick is this?" He took a knife from his pocket, opened it, laid the envelope on his palm, and ripped open the flap, saying, "Here goes, anyway!"

Niels Larsen, a sexton who was sitting by the barn door, along with a bottle of brandy, must complete this tale in his own words, as for many a year he was ready to do in any crowded taproom.

"It had been a fine marriage feast, and I was looking after myself well, seated by the door, because the air inside had become dangerously close for a man who wanted to cool his head. Like the rest, I had heard all that business about the letter, and was just rising to draw near Knudsen, when I saw him take a knife to the flap. As he did so, there was a fearful crash, louder than the bursting of a dam, and from the envelope gushed such a bulk of water, that it not only filled the barn, but also shattered it; beam from beam, and stone from stone.

"I have just told you I was near the door, and lucky for me too, seeing that, in a trice, I was swimming for my life, and all the time whirled about as if I had fallen in a mill-race. Under I went, giddy, almost scared to death, and deafened by the crash of timber, mingled with such screams as I hope never to hear again. After that, all I remember is I found myself astride a beam, riding down the valley on a great head of water that put me in mind of friend Noah afloat in a drowned world. Believe me, I clung to my rafter tight as a teazle on a worsted stocking, till the timber got wedged among some pines atop of a

bluff, two miles away by Tondrup's farm. When we grounded, I climbed up the hillside out of reach of danger. In my mouth was a nasty, flat taste, which I recognized as the long-forgotten flavour of water, stuff I never use except for washing. I was pretty near frozen to the marrow, so I walked about in the moonlight, and all that time, far below, the flood was raging and grinding down dale. Of a sudden I came across Hendrik the miller, whom I had last seen seated on a small cask close beside me near the barn door. For a minute neither of us could speak, because each took the other to be a ghost, so pasty were our faces with what we had gone through. It turned out that he had floated to safety on the barrel, which, I may remark, I had helped him to empty, and thereby can claim a share in saving his life. By dawn the water had found its level. For miles either way stretched the great lake that is there now to prove my words. Except myself and Hendrik, all the people in the upper end of the valley perished. During the next few months, body after body floated ashore. Some of the drowned—among them Knudsen and all his family—have never turned up; nor will they, I reckon, till the judgment day.

“As to the cause of the trouble, I was told that, some weeks after, the parson of Laven, yonder in the neighbouring dale, received a letter, which was slipped mysteriously under his door by night. He read it from the pulpit the following Sunday; and they do say no congregation ever left a church more soberly.

“From what was in the letter, it appears that Knudsen had made a bargain with a Troll who lived on the farm, and that he had cheated the Earthman by some dirty trick. In revenge, the Troll, happening to hear that Lota Knudsen was going to be married, packed into an envelope Oe Water, which used to fill a valley above Hellingdal. That was the letter her father received on the wedding night. The rest you



know. Certain it is that where Oe pool used to be, people found a great, oozy hollow, though during these years it has almost filled up again.

“ If you doubt my story, go down to Hellingdal, and you will find a tidy-sized lake where Knudsen's farm used to stand. The valley has a bad name, and is now deserted, for if you sail across the water when no wind stirs, you can see, far down, the ruins of buildings, and, moving about them, ghostly figures of men, women, and children. Among these you will distinguish Lota by her silver-gilt crown, and near her, Olaf Knudsen, whose eyes are such that those who look on them shake with the cold of fear, even on the sultriest summer day.”

## THE WEAVING OF NETS

LONG ago, perhaps before the time when the ancestors of the present Maoris came in their canoe Waka-tuwhenua, together with eight other canoes, across the seas to New Zealand, all fish were alike. Only one kind swam in the sea.

In those far-off days it happened that a certain man, who, after severe trials in his home, had fled, abandoning his family, so as to seek what he could not find in his own abode, awakened in his wife's heart desire for revenge. She approached Tangaroa, the scaly god of the fish, and besought his help.

This, after sharply rebuking her for an evil temper, the god decided to give, and, having assembled his legions, sent out scouts to find where the unfortunate man had taken refuge. When his place of shelter was discovered, the fish attacked and defeated the tribe that was protecting him.

After their victory Tangaroa wished to reward his warriors. Upon his asking them what he could do for their pleasure, they one and all asked for greater diversity. "Let us have various shapes and different names," they cried in their strange fish language.

"Then," thundered Tangaroa, the god, "choose, O ye fish!"

So it befell that the gurnet made his choice, desiring to be red in colour, and to groan as though he were a dying man. The skate asked for a shape like a boy's kite. The swordfish, during the war, had used a



spear, and was now anxious to bear one at the end of his nose. And thus the several kinds of fish gained their shapes, colours, and distinctive features.

But, as yet, when man sought to catch fish he was unable to cope with their subtle movements. He could only trust to the gods, and leave dangling in the water a fish-hook made from the jawbone of the grandfather of Maui (that Maui who was too sacred to be represented by images) till some fish more stupid than others chanced to open his mouth in passing.

This was hungry and slow work, but nothing was done to alter things till the days of Kahukura, who, going to see the fairies, found by subtlety their secrets and revealed the mystery of that wondrous knot known to all Maoris, although strange to every white man. And because these things are so, whenever Maoris take a big haul of fish they divide it into three—one portion is cooked in ovens for the use of the gods; the second is for the chiefs—those who rank with Kahukura; the third goes for the common man, who must eat to live, but who has the use of implement and food only because he, a poor dull thing, has been taught by those cleverer than himself.

Now Kahukura was fair, and his skin was almost white, so that his fellows called him Kiritea, or fair as to the skin, and, perhaps, that was why he dwelt more or less apart. Other Maoris were big, brown-skinned, and warlike, and, although Kahukura was quite a clever fisherman and able to swim as far and as fast as the others, yet from his childhood the men and women of his tribe regarded him as different from themselves. Hence, as he grew older, he lived more and more by himself. Even the maids, as they sat making fish-hooks out of wood, tossed their heads contemptuously as the fair man drew near, and whispered and laughed saucily among themselves.

Such conduct does not attract, and finding he was scorned by old and young alike, Kahukura lived by

himself, and thought for himself. Yet he bore no grudge against any one. "They cannot help it, nor can I," he reflected. "But I might as well go and sit on the blow-hole of a sperm whale; those who ought to be my friends are so frequently scolding me."

So he lived to himself, and being an active man with a deep interest in everything, he was driven by his loneliness to a greater zeal for wandering and to a deeper zest for discovering the mystery of life around him. Nature never mocked or scolded him, although he realized that he must for ever be on his guard even when she seemed fairest. Kahukura was aware that if any one cast a spear of wood at him he could parry it; but he knew that he could not guard himself against the thrust of a bitter word.

As he sat one evening when the summer was at its height, he heard a number of the brown-skinned Maoris talking about their island. At first he did not pay much heed to their words, for he was a poor listener and better at using his eyes than his ears. However, one man spoke so loudly and so excitedly that Kahukura had to listen, and this is what he heard.

"I tell you there are such people—as fair as that dreamer over there."

"Oh!" cried another, "Tangaroa was yellow-haired, and all fair-haired children are born of him. Perhaps . . ."

"That may be," interrupted the loud-voiced one; "but these people I speak of are smaller than he is. People call them Patupaiarehe, meaning, tiny, fair-haired, fair-skinned folk, and they are always joyous, always singing; yet they come out only at night."

"I have met men who had seen things left on the seashore near Rangiaowhia."

"What things?" asked one of his comrades.





Even the maids tossed their heads contemptuously.

"I cannot tell you," was his reply. "The men did not know what they were, and did not touch them because they might be evil."

A loud laugh followed this remark, and the conversation passed on to other topics. But this was just where Kahukura differed from his fellows. Their words were tossed about like the spume on the waves or rippled like the breeze that bends the *toé-toé*; and their thoughts were just as restless. With him, however, a word remained, and sometimes a thought would dwell with him in his house of tussock grass until it almost seemed to live and have a voice of its own.

But he was unwilling to sit and dream with these thoughts. He carried them about with him, for he knew that a man who gets plenty of *kakahi* is respected, while he who prefers sleeping in his house will have his brains knocked out by his wife. Kahukura had no wife, but other people as well as wives can do mischief.

All the women of the tribe despised him. If a Maori with black, shiny hair hanging in ringlets to his shoulders passed by a group of women as they squatted, one foot tucked under the knee of the other leg, weaving feather cloaks from the plumage of the *Wekakakiriki*, or the *Kakapo*, and chanting as they wove, glances of admiration followed the stalwart figure; but, when Kahukura happened to come near, derisive gestures and significant looks were exchanged. The fair man noticed that one woman especially, not much more than a girl, and by name *Tango-tango*, would make signs of her contempt, and, when his back was turned, he knew that she was more responsible than any other for the cessation of the chant, and for the squeals of laughter that arose from the party. All this was unpleasant, for Maori women hold a strong position, and, when the fire is made in the hut, it is woman who stands as master of the



household with one foot among the soft broken wood, while man, her toiler, rubs the hard sticks into grooves whence springs the kindling spark.

Kahukura treasured the words spoken by his fellows about the fair folk. Wherever he went, he pondered them. "Rumours are for ever coming over Mount Piwane," he thought; "one must not believe all one hears; still I should like to know for certain about this. Supposing that I went myself to see!" And that was another thought which came to lodge with this lonely man.

The outcome of all this reflection was that in course of time he resolved to journey north to find these strange folk who came out at night. The weather being very warm, he needed to carry only his tapa, a robe of bark-cloth, and a basket made of hibiscus leaves, while a stout wooden spear was his weapon. He told nobody of his intentions, and truly not a soul troubled that he was absent. People said, "The strange fellow has gone off again somewhere," and then thought no more about him.

Kahukura journeyed on through woods of kauri pine, through swamps where grew flax, and giant bulrushes, and golden-plumed pampas. He crossed the mountainous streams at the places of weariness—that is to say, where the waters were narrow. Here he would pass under wide-spreading tree-ferns that waved their fringed and lacy leaves over his head, and dappled his body with light and shade. Deeper among the giant growth he beheld huge trees caught in the grip of octopus-like tentacles that were crushing the life out of their victims and wrapping them in a shell-like husk. From the branches of other trees drooped long suckers falling on a soil matted with creepers, and roots, and moss. Wherever Kahukura came to a break in the forest he could see in the distance towering peaks of mountains fringing the sky-line, or nearer at hand steam rising from those

strange hot streams that gush from the heart of the world. Sometimes in the dense evergreen forests of pines and birches the clear note of the bell-tui sounded in the man's ears; now he would catch sight of a kiwi hurrying through the bracken. The red feathers of the kapa attracted his eye, but he was aware that he must not stop to track these creatures to their nests among the dangerous places. His work lay along other lines.

It was for the most part a silent journey, for there were not then so many of those singing birds we know familiarly. These have come with white men from across the sea. At night he made for himself, under some great Miko, or palm tree, a couch of fern leaves, and he ate the baked fern roots, and the fish and taro that he carried in his basket. Having fed, he would lie and watch the moon creep from the flush of a dying day, and wonder at the strange shadows stealing among the trunks and branches of trees, or his glance would fall on the flitting bats as they swept to and fro. Strange noises, unlike those of the day, were heard in the forest, and the man felt that it was almost better to be in his own hut near those of other men, even though these had mocked him during the day. But a brave man goes on though the day is cloudy or the night is dark, for he has his work to do and an idler finds no pity from the gods. A little hatchet fells great trees and clears much ground, but its strokes must fall continuously on the trunk.

After he had journeyed twice two nights and once again Kahukura knew that he was not far from Rangiaowhia. So he stayed to rest beneath some bushes near the seashore. It was now Turu, the fifteenth day of the moon's age. So still was the air that water and sky seemed to blend, and when the stars dropped into their places, below each star lay its image like a jewel on the breast of the sea. Kahu-



kura munched his meal, contentedly watching the peaceful scene before him.

All at once, to his surprise, for the place was remote, a movement of the water caught his gaze. The star images trembled, then widened out into quivering patches of silver upon the molten sea. As he searched for the explanation, he beheld two canoes swiftly approaching the shore. The man sat entranced, not a movement did he make—not a sound escaped his lips. He drew back farther into the bushes, watching intently. The canoes touched the beach. Their occupants leapt out, and dragging their craft beyond the reach of the sea, moved busily backwards and forwards, dark figures against the sky-line. Then, as they trotted to and fro, the moon arose, and, her light waxing brighter, Kahukura could see plainly that these were no brown-skinned Polynesians but people as white and fair as he was himself. Sweet strains of music stole o'er the sands as these strange people bent to their work. He trembled with excitement. The news was true! Should he rush out and join them?

But prudence restrained him. He knew too well, poor fellow, the cruelty of a rebuff, and, besides, he was not sure of the nature of these people. Better for the present to sit and watch. And, as he sat thus, he began to understand what they were doing. He could see clearly that they were carrying fish up the beach—scores of fish whose scales gleamed brightly in the moonlight. Some of the folk were gutting them. Soon a fire kindled on the beach showed that a meal was being cooked. Still Kahukura sat motionless, gazing at the scene, until at last, just before dawn, the fair folk pushed their canoes into the sea, and, embarking, paddled away across the dim waters.

As soon as they were out of sight the watcher came from his shelter and went down to the shore. All over the sand were footprints. He bent and ex-

amined some of these, finding that they were smaller than those made by his own feet. "Tangaroa is the god of fish," he murmured to himself. "Can these be of his tribe? A! see what numbers of fish they had. There must have been hundreds! Who of mortal men could catch fish so easily unless he had lordship over the waters, and could drive the foe along, as man with his foot drives the leaves of the forest in winter. A! you can afford to waste food, can you? See these mackerel left carelessly on the sand. Then perhaps you live upon Mount Hunakia where roast birds are so plentiful: surely these are the Patupaiarehe, the joyous folk who always sing. I must learn more of such people who come by night, and eat, and leave their food-treasure to waste in the heat of midday."

Kahukura took some of the fish he found lying about and, making a fire in the wood close at hand, fed lustily. Then, after his night of watching he fell fast asleep, and slept till evening. As the shadows fell anew he came once more to the shore, and this time rested under the shelter of a rock near to the sea. Again the night was still and the stars seemed to drop from heaven to sleep on the heart of the waters. Then through the silence of night came the trembling of the silvery mirror, and the approach of the two canoes to the land. Soon the fair people were busied on the sand. Some were crying a word that the stranger among them could not understand.

"Bring the Whaka-whiu," they cried. And in response to the command others came dragging something behind them, chanting as they did so:

"Drop the net in the trackless sea  
(Rangiaowhia, Rangiaowhia),  
Drag the net where waters teem.  
A! the silvery scales a-gleam;  
Haul it ashore at Mamaku."



And through the rhythm of their music pulsed a sense of deep joy. So engrossed were they that they seemed to have no eyes but for the work upon which they were engaged.

Seeing this, Kahukura, growing bold, stole from his hiding-place, and, mingling with the throng, began to do as they did, for one of their number, seeing the man was unoccupied, raised his eyebrows to bid him approach. As they dragged, so he dragged, and this he did with more confidence, for he saw in the moonlight that he was as fair as they were, and his skin very nearly as white. He had cast aside his cloak, and like them wore only a loin-cloth. Clearly they did not know that a stranger was in their midst. Once again they set to work to cook some of the fish that lay in the strange thing they had hauled up the beach, and then they fed upon their spoil. After that they began to share the harvest. No one was there to divide the fish, but each person helped himself to what he wanted, and, as he took up a fish, ran a long fibre through its gills, while ever and again some one or other would cry, "Hasten, friends, hasten, for the sun is now creeping up to the edge of the sea."

Kahukura joined in threading the fish ; but, hearing this message, he was determined to delay these children of the darksome night. Therefore, every time his thread was strung full with fish he allowed the knot to slip, and down dropped the shining load upon the sand. These curious folk at last noticed his clumsiness, and some of them came to his help. Once more the thread was strung, and again the knot tied by Kahukura slipped, and the fish fell to the shore. This cunning continued till suddenly one of the fair folk, raising his head and catching sight of the dawn, gave utterance to a cry of warning. Then the company all turned and looked closely at Kahukura, and for the first time realized that he was a stranger in their midst. With a cry of dismay they fled to

their canoes. Dragging these speedily to the waves, they pushed off, and paddled furiously from the shore.

Kahukura gazed after them, as fully bewildered by their sudden departure as they were alarmed at being overtaken by the dawn. So swiftly did they drive their craft through the water that, even as he gazed, they vanished from his sight. He turned and looked around him on the beach. There were the remains of the fish ; there were the footprints, and, lo ! there was the thing he had helped to drag over the sand. As he stood in the swelling light of dawn, objects grew clearer and he was able to notice them more distinctly. He went nearer to the wondrous thing, and, bending down, saw that it was made of split flax leaves interwoven so as to form dozens of meshes, and, behold, in some of these meshes were fish with their heads caught behind their gills so that they could not escape. Kahukura stood in wonder. Never had he seen such a thing before. Whenever he or his fellows went fishing, they used the clumsy wooden hooks made for them by the women of the tribe ; and as often as not the fish took long to catch.

Then the words of the song these folk had chanted came back to him—

“ Drag the net where waters teem.”

This, then, was Whaka-whiu, a net. It was meant to catch fish, for here were the fish cleverly caught. These people must be something more than men to have such contrivances as this. He rose and looked about the beach. The light was now powerful, and as he searched he found, close by the place where the canoes had stood, fragments of fern and stalks of grass that had evidently been dropped by the fair folk when they had stepped from their craft. “ Then they are beings like myself, for they need to sit upon



seats that are soft, and though their canoes are Mokihi \* yet these seats are made as we make ours. Gods need no such things. These men must be more than men but less than gods, for they dread the day and love the night. They eat food, and speak with their tongues sounds I know so well. Yet they are not dark but fair like myself, therefore I shall call them fairies."

Now as Kahukura stood thus, reasoning and pondering, he thought to himself: "If these people can drop the net in the waves and catch fish, why should not I and my fellows do it? As the fish are now taken from the net, it cannot be very heavy. Perhaps I could lift it and carry it to my home in the south."

He stooped and gathered the net in handfuls to his feet. He found that he could easily draw it together into one bundle. "That is good," quoth he. "I shall teach my fellows how to catch fish in nets." Then, being a thinker, and one who looks far ahead, he began to remember that in time most things wear out. The moon every month dwindles. Only the great sun remains unchanged, although even he grows cooler every year in the darker months. This net—how was it made? Could he find out? He opened some of the net and touched the split fibres with his fingers. See! the fibre was bent over here, and under there. In this place it crossed and recrossed.

"I will find some leaves and try for myself," said Kahukura the fair. So he searched, and having found some suitable leaves, split them and set to work to bend and fold, cross and recross in imitation of what he saw. For a long while he made little progress, but at last a cry of delight left his lips. He had made a knot just like the original. He tried again, and succeeded. Again and again the knot was made, and

\* Made of rushes.

then the man bent to his task, and, before many waves had rolled up and down the beach, he had fashioned a little net like the one he possessed.

He rose, and chanted a song of thanksgiving to the gods. For the future, his fellows should catch fish after the manner of the fair folk, and he, Kahukura the fair, would teach them how to do so.

He rolled up the net again, gathered together his few possessions, and leaving the shore retraced his steps homeward. By day he travelled, by night he slept, arriving towards nightfall, after twice two nights and one more, at his own little hut. He entered unseen, placed the net in a corner, and sank on his comfortable bed of fern leaves.

At break of day he took his net, and launching his canoe, paddled out to sea. Then he dropped the net over the end of the vessel, and fastening it securely began to paddle towards the shore. As he worked at the paddle, the canoe seemed to travel more and more slowly. At last his task became so heavy that, by the time he reached the shore, he was almost dead beat.

Seeing him approach thus, some of his fellow-tribesmen, curious as to his occupation, condescended to come near to his canoe and ask him why he had laboured in this manner.

The fair man spoke as follows: "Bring hither the priests of our tribe that they may hear what I have to say."

Some of the men, forgetting their former contempt in their desire to know what had happened, ran fast and brought back several of the priests. Then Kahukura told his story. There, upon the beach at the edge of the sparkling waves, he described his journey to these fair folk; he told how he had watched them, and all that he had seen and heard. Then holding up a portion of his net, he showed the fish caught in the meshes.



“And, ye priests,” said he, “here and now I ask you this: If I was taught by these fair folk, the Patupaiarehe, thus to catch fish, what hinders you from doing the same thing? Tell us in your wisdom whether you will go and conquer the fish in this new fashion?”

The priests whispered together. Clearly if this story of Kahukura were true, more fish must come to the shore; and if more fish came, then there would be more to eat. Their decision did not take long. “Go, Kahukura, and take with you a crew to see if this thing can be done again.”

Now by this time the whole tribe was assembled on the beach—men, women, and children. Kahukura showed several of the men how to hold the net, and drag it up the beach. Following that he taught them how to disengage the fish from the meshes. When dozens and dozens of fish lay white and frisking on the beach, watched by the delighted eyes of the women-folk, the fair man, choosing a large canoe and several suitable men, again took the net, and so they pushed off to sea. About an hour later the canoe was seen to be returning slowly and heavily. A buzz of excitement rose from the shore. Nearer it drew, and nearer, till dozens of willing hands reached out to draw it up the beach.

Again Kahukura addressed the priests. “Come and behold the gift of the sea,” he said.

Before the wondering eyes of the tribe the net was dragged over the beach. It was full of splendid fish. “Lo!” cried a priest, “fish that once gained the victory over man is now our captive.” Then a shout arose from the throats of a hundred men, “Honour to Kahukura the fair! praise to Kahukura the fair! For he has taught us to humble our foes. ’Tis he who has brought us Whaka-whiu, the net, to ensnare our victors.”

The priests took the lead in this pæan of praise.

They raised their voices to sing of the overthrow of Tangaroa. They chanted how the fish god lashed the gloomy and peaceful waters of Lake Taupo till suddenly the waves rolled high: they sang of his home in the milky waters of Lake Rotomohana at the foot of the mountain, and of his sleep among the bright green mosses when his breath rose like clouds of steam from his nostrils. Then they chanted of the way he dived beneath the waves of ocean breathing so heavily that the waters ebbed and flowed, and how when the sun dropped in the sky the god turned the water to the sacred colour Kura in honour of his power and might.

Thus they chanted, and as they sang, gradually the men and women of the tribe fell to dancing around Kahukura, their tapa drapery, from waist to knee, rising and falling in the light like the flashes of a bird's plumage; they donned their finest ornaments, jangling them in musical rhythm to the chant of the priests. First the elder women; then the younger; then the men; then, combining, men and women; the men now leading the women; afterwards the women leading the men; but all doing honour to Kahukura, who stood silent in their midst.

All, that is, save one. As Kahukura stood drinking in this generous tribute to his discovery, he saw, standing afar off by the side of a bread-fruit tree, and clothed in her simple garment of hibiscus, the slender figure of Tango-tango, solitary and silent.

The chant of the priests ceased. The dance dwindled to an end. In the pause that followed one of the priests, a man of high rank, came towards Kahukura and, placing in his hands the wand of Greenstone, symbol of power and authority, hailed him as chief. The cry was taken up by all around.

They led Kahukura the fair to the biggest of their huts, and brought him food upon plaited mats, waiting upon him as he sat and ate in their presence,



and taking care that every sacred rite should be duly observed.

When he had finished, the priest asked him if he had any wish for them to fulfil.

"Yes," quoth Kahukura. "Bring hither the maiden Tango-tango, mocker and scorner of my fairness."

Some of the youths ran swiftly to bring her before their chief. But Apakura, one of the older women, waved them aside, and led Tango-tango with her own hands to their lord.

"Hearken, O my friends," said he. "Women and war are the two dangers of man, and, while this girl is as beautiful as the mottled trout in the mountain pool, her tongue is sharper than one of our old fish-hooks, and her shrill laugh cuts like a thong. In the days gone by she has mocked me to my face and behind my back. Have I the power as your chief to work my will that she may know the strength of my hands?"

A cry arose bestowing upon him every power as their chief.

Then Kahukura rose, and said: "As my net catches the fish darting in the sea, so my hands draw Tango-tango to me. Behold, I take her as my wife. If she will love and serve me, then, as I rule the men, so she shall rule the women of our race. Is Tango-tango willing?"

The girl, relieved from the fear of death, sank at his feet at these gracious words, and, in gratitude for the gift of life, sobbed out her willingness.

Then Kahukura took her to his home, and they began a life of love and great happiness, teaching their fellows the mystery of the net, and showing them the joy of that perfect union which springs from devotion and service.

*L. Christen. Roiey*

## FEODOR'S BRIDE

It is the hope of most poor couples to have a son who will one day be the support and comfort of his aged parents. Sometimes that hope is fulfilled, sometimes the cradle remains empty. But old Marko Kurbski and his wife Marusia, at least, had one son, and thought themselves blest. Feodor, as they had named him, was a handsome lad, with fair hair and bright brown eyes, having just as many virtues as, and no more vices than, the majority of his countrymen. At times he would work with a will ; at others, his inborn love for wandering would lead him away when he should have been striving to win good grain from the moist earth. Still, who could complain ? A man cannot live with his nose always to the grindstone, and old Marusia was well content with her one lad.

The three of them lived in a rough log hut near Rybinsk, just where the mighty river Volga turns eastward to claim the waters of the Oka. Here in the rough soil, wrung from the clutches of the great forest, they managed to grow a little *ledianka*, or ice-wheat—poor enough stuff in itself, yet sufficing them. Marko seemed never to rest, nor dared to do so, for only by ceaseless labour could he satisfy his lord's demands for tribute and then have a little store to house in his wooden *ovin* or corn oven.

Thus the family just managed to live, and meet the agent as he came round. Now Dmitri Pavlovitch.



despite his office, was a man of kindly disposition, and, although old Marko would grunt feelingly, "Praise not a landlord until he is in his coffin," the agent often chaffed and bandied jests with Feodor.

"Say now," he would cry, "when shall we see young hands at the loom? You are no stripling lad now; 'tis time you sought a wife."

Then Dmitri would stroll laughingly away, leaving behind him a blushing, restless, dissatisfied youth.

"Why not?" thought Feodor. "Why should I not have a wife? A little more work and I could support her—at least, as well as most of the girls in this village are kept."

The old people looked at each other. They felt, rather than knew, what was passing in Feodor's mind. At last Marusia spoke out.

"Son," she said, "what maiden is it that has caught your heart in her snare? Tell me, that I may go and speak for you."

"Well, mother," replied Feodor, "I would fain have Olga, the daughter of Peter the tailor, or Katrina, whose father was Zachary the smith. Yet I know not; any maid, so long as she is sweet and kind, will suit me."

The following day being Sunday, the three of them went dutifully to Mass in the ugly village church. Against the stone walls hung the holy pictures that, gaudy as they were, were to these peasants the visible signs of their faith. Feodor performed his devotions with some semblance of earnestness; Marko was perfunctory, as one for whom long custom had staled a mystery; but Marusia was openly impatient. She cast sharp glances round, noting here and there a maiden in clean chemisette, well-spun cloth, and high cap out of which two long, neatly-braided plaits hung down her back. Martha Skavkaya caught Marusia's eye. She was a comfortably-placed young widow, with a face only slightly marked by the skin

disease so common in those parts. She would be glad of another husband, and her property would make just the difference between half poverty and comfort. The mother, however, shook her head.

"We may be poor," she muttered to herself, "but no young man has seen misfortune until he has married a widow."

As soon as the old and greasy priest had finished mumbling what he called his service, Marusia sent her husband and Feodor back to their home, while she herself set off on her self-imposed task. Respecting her son's wishes, she went first to the house of Peter the tailor. Scarcely had she begun to make her request than the whole family burst into prolonged peals of loud laughter.

"Our Olga!" cried Peter. "Give our Olga to that pap-faced lout, who has not so much as a sheepskin to his name, and not even good corn on his scurvy mud-plot! Ha, ha! That is good."

Poor Marusia had not heard that it had already been arranged to take Olga next Whit-Sunday to Kostroma. There, in the principal street, she would meet groups of maidens who, like herself, had been taken thither for exhibition. She would be placed in a long line with the other girls; behind her would stand a female match-maker, and behind the latter as many feminine relations as could be present. The man seeking a wife walked between the lines of giggling girls and anxious match-makers, studying the faces of the maidens who caught his fancy. Then, late in the evening, when the exhibition was finished, the squabbling over dowry would begin; and continue until both sides had haggled and fought for the last copeck. Then, all being satisfied, the girl became the bride of a man she had never seen till that day.

"Why not try for Martha Skavkaya; she's ugly, but rich. She would be a catch for your Feodor," said Olga viciously. "As for me——" she added, and



spread out her hands and shrugged her shoulders in a manner that spoke volumes.

Marusia said nothing, but thought the more as, followed by shouts of vulgar laughter, she left the house.

Her next call was at the home of the widow of Zachary. Katrina was not at home, but the mother received Marusia kindly, pressing upon her a glass of tea from the ever-ready samovar.

"No, no, my good Marusia," she said, "that cannot be. Your boy is a fine upstanding lad, and a good son. My heart is towards him; but Katrina was promised by my husband to her cousin Boris. I dare not say him nay."

"Ah well," replied Marusia, "kind words are better than a pie. 'Tis good to hear you speak gently of the lad, though he may not have Katrina."

House after house the mother visited, and at each one was met with excuse or rebuff. At last she was fain to return home: not one maid was willing to be the bride of Feodor. He was poor, it is true, but so were they all. Poor Marusia could not understand the matter at all, and on her way back paused at the church to take counsel of the Holy Mother; but the countenance on the picture seemed so cold and remote in the grey evening light that she went away more depressed than ever.

At the entrance of their home Feodor was waiting impatiently. One glance at his mother's face as she came near seemed to tell him all. His spirits sank, and he turned away into the hut, hiding himself from them.

The next day, as soon as it was light, the youth rose from his straw bed and stood before his parents.

"Father," he said to old Marko, "if the maids of this village scorn me, I will go out into the great world beyond and seek a bride for myself. Come, give me your blessing! I'll go where my nose guides me,

and, if the devil himself offers me a wife, I'll take her."

The youth spoke angrily, and the old people, seeing that his spirit was roused, felt that it would be useless to try to stop him.

"Go, Feodor," said Marko. "An old man's blessing go with you. When you are in doubt, pray to God; but keep on rowing to the shore. As for the devil, remember that when you make acquaintance with a bear you must keep hold of the axe."

Marusia said nothing. She kissed the lad, and turned away.

So, with no worldly goods save enough rye bread for the day and a handful of parched corn, Feodor set out. He had no idea as to which path he should take, but he bent his steps towards the forest behind his home. Perhaps beyond it lay rich towns where he might be lucky. He might even reach the great sea, of which he had heard merchants speak when their journeyings took them through his little village. He walked fast, for his mind, being still in a turmoil of anger, lent speed to his feet.

"Yes," he cried aloud at last; "if the devil himself appears before me and offers me a wife I'll take her!"

The youth had hardly uttered these words when he noticed, ascending a steep bank, a man, very old and not at all prepossessing in appearance. Feodor was surprised to see one so aged thus far from human habitation, and courteously hurried forward to assist the traveller up the bank. But it seemed needless, for scarcely had the thought passed through the lad's mind than, with startling suddenness, the old man stood on the path just in front of him.

"Young man," he said, in a firm voice that seemed to contradict the age of his body, "what did you say just now?"

Feodor blushed, and began to stammer.



"Have no fear," went on the old man. "I may be able to give you all you want—perhaps more," he added, with a sinister chuckle that made Feodor's blood run cold.

Some irresistible power compelled the lad to tell his companion the whole story: how Olga had mocked him, how Katrina was given to another, how Martha, Sophia, Anna, one and all had refused him. He had wormed these details from his mother during the night, before he left home.

The old man laughed when the recital was done. "Come," he said, "youth must not be downcast at the first rebuff. You know, a wife, without beating her husband, rules him with her tongue. Are you anxious to be ruled by Olga Petrovna's tongue that you weep at her refusal?"

Feodor hung his head. "I did not know she was like that," he said.

"No!" continued the old man. "Few suspect the iron hand within the velvet glove. But come with me. You shall see many maids, all good, all handsome, all with dowries. You shall marry any one you choose."

The youth looked at the old man in amazement; but before he could speak his companion had taken his hand and was leading him along with a speed that seemed wellnigh impossible for those ancient limbs. Feodor would have liked to refuse, yet some power that he could not define urged him on. In silence this ill-assorted pair, one a young, fair-haired youth, the other an old and ugly man, journeyed on, coming at last to a lake set in the very depths of the forest.

Strangely enough, although winter was near at hand, there was no sign of frost around the pool. Even the clouds of mosquitoes, that made the short summer a torment, were still humming around. The waters were clear and sparkling, and the tall trees

around seemed to stand like giant sentinels watching over a precious jewel.

The two travellers stood by the edge of the lake. Feodor, looking down into its waters, felt a glow steal over his body. Beautiful shapes that he had scarcely even dreamed of took form before his eyes. Perfumes met his nostrils, and delicate flavours clung to his palate. He stood gazing at the lake as if he were in a trance.

Suddenly his companion touched him, and the youth found himself falling and sinking into the waters. He did not struggle, for they seemed to lap warmly about him like soft blankets curled about a sleeping form. He sank lower and still lower, while the gentle movement of the ripples round him lulled him as though to sleep. How far he sank Feodor never knew, but at last he opened his eyes and found himself lying at the foot of a flight of polished stone steps. He rose to his feet. All round him were signs of wealth and luxury. The steps led up to a vast square palace, whose very size astounded the country lad's mind. As he stood gazing helplessly round, wondering if he had indeed reached the paradise of which the old priest had often spoken in the church, a figure appeared on the steps. It was Feodor's forest companion.

If he had been ugly when he first appeared, he was now most inexpressibly ugly, for his attire—sumptuous robes of velvet and fur, a jewel-clasped cap, and fine gold chain about his throat—served to emphasize the flashing, crafty eyes, the pointed ears, and the thin and cruel nose, shaped like a vulture's beak. The very girdle of his robe was so thick-set with gems that every movement of his body caused it to flash with rainbow lights.

"Come hither, youth," he called, in a smooth voice. "You are my guest, and must partake of the best that I have."



Clapping his hands, he caused twelve youths of Feodor's own age to appear. These were clad in scarlet and gold, and, as they moved, seemed like flames of fire. On their feet, instead of the common *passela* or sandal, they wore red leather boots, and on their heads were crimson velvet caps fastened with great green emeralds. Feodor gasped at the sight.

"These," continued his host, "will conduct you through the palace and clothe you suitably. They have one advantage over the ordinary serf: they do not chatter. Be pleased to follow them, my guest."

The lad would fain have asked who his host was, and what was this strange place to which he himself had been brought so mysteriously. He had, however, to follow the twelve scarlet-robed servants, for at the conclusion of his own speech the old man had disappeared.

Feodor was then led through the palace—through room after room, each more sumptuous than the last. Marble pillars supported roofs of crystal inlaid with gold. Ornaments fashioned from enormous precious stones stood around, while alabaster jars of wondrous shapes diffused sweet-smelling odours. A warm, rosy light bathed the palace, entirely overcoming that chilliness which seems to emanate from the cold beauty of polished marble and stone. On the floors were carpets so thick that the feet sank into them as into the feathers of a bed. Pausing at last in a sumptuous bedchamber, the scarlet-clad attendants began to divest Feodor of his own poor attire. His old fur cap had already been taken from him, and now they removed also the rough-spun frieze coat, the heavy, clumsy boots, and the thin shirt, once red, but now faded out to a nondescript muddy hue. Garment by garment, the youth was reclad, and silk, soft as a spider's web, clung to his skin. Over all they

threw a gorgeous purple robe with a strange device patterned upon it in gold thread. On his head they set a velvet cap edged with soft fur, and on his feet sandals of the softest leather clasped in front by great emeralds that winked wickedly even in that soft, rosy light. No one dreamed of offering Feodor a bath before he donned these choice garments. Perhaps they felt that the youth had had cleansing enough in coming down through the waters of the lake, although it was probably the first time in his life that he had been immersed.

When he was ready, the silent servants led Feodor into a small banqueting room, where stood a table ready laid for a meal. The strange old man, his host, was waiting to receive him, and conducted the youth to a seat. In silence food was set before the two. Fish, flesh, fowl, pastries, fruits and sweetmeats followed in succession. Fragrant wines of delicate flavour were served in crystal goblets.

All this while Feodor had been seemingly tongue-tied. He had not uttered a single word since his arrival in this strange world. He ate and drank what was placed before him, and never before in his life had he partaken of such a sumptuous meal.

At the close of the dinner the old man began to speak. "My name," he said, "is Sammaël."

Feodor, never having heard it before, said nothing, but continued to gaze at his host.

"You may not have heard that name," the old man went on blandly, "but then, I have many names, according to the speech of those who converse with me.

"All this," he added, waving his hands carelessly towards the objects round him, "is mine, yet I am very willing to share it with any who desire it. Men have but to ask of me and I give freely—nay, I bestow more than they ask, for always I make the





“Come hither, youth,” he called, in a smooth voice.

stipulation that when they have finished with their lives in the upper world they shall come to dwell here with me."

The old man ended with a chuckle that ran down the youth's spine like an icy finger. He felt dumb and suffocated. He would gladly have gone back to rags and poverty in exchange for one breath of the sweet cold forest air. He would have screamed and rushed from the room had not the old man's eyes fixed him, as by a magic spell, to his chair.

"Now," continued the host, "I will show you what I promised."

He struck a golden bell at his side, and twelve maidens trooped in and prostrated themselves at his feet, all, that is, save one, who stood upright despite the terrible glances flung at her.

"Stand," he commanded, and as they obeyed, trembling, Sammaël added, "Go to yonder youth. Let him see you, for one of you shall marry him."

"You," he said to his guest, "shall now choose your wished-for bride."

Feodor looked at the maidens. Every one was beautiful. One was tall and stately, another plump and fair, a third delicate and sylph-like, a fourth merry and roguish. Each had so much to recommend her that the youth, already dazed with his surroundings, seemed to lose his wits entirely.

"All of them," added the old man softly, "are dowered with gold, and silver, and jewels. You have but to speak, and all is yours, maiden and gold, and silver, and jewels."

Just as he was about to stretch out his hand to a fair, merry-looking girl of about his own age, Feodor caught what seemed to be a gleam of warning in the eyes of the dark and beautiful girl who had refused obeisance to Sammaël. He drew back his half-outstretched hand.

That look seemed to loosen his tongue and break



the spell around him. His peasant wit suddenly came to his rescue.

"Sir," said he to his host, "your kindness overwhelms me. A poor serf is not used to the sight of so much beauty. Give me, I pray you, the night in which to think over the charms of these maidens. If your kind offer is repeated to-morrow, maybe in the cool morning light my judgment will be wiser; for, after all, what is wealth and beauty if it is allied to the temper of a vixen robbed of her cubs?"

The host bowed courteously. "Let it be so," he said. "Rest to-night; choose to-morrow."

The maidens vanished, and the twelve scarlet-clad attendants reappeared and escorted Feodor to his sleeping-chamber. It was with surprise that he felt the servants stripping him of his soft robes and re-clothing him in special garments for the night. He, who all his life had done as his fellows did, and flung himself down on his straw in his day clothes, for the first time felt and appreciated the touch of soft, cool linen. Yet, although seductive sleep wooed him on the soft, scented bed, his mind was astir and restless. He wished himself out of it all. The old man with his vulture-like face frightened him, and, as the youth looked back over his day's adventures, he remembered how strangely he had arrived in this place.

Presently the door opened, and a dim, gliding form approached the bed. Feodor sprang up ready to grapple with the figure, fearing it was an evil spirit sent to destroy him.

"Have no fear," said a soft voice, "I have come for your good, not for your harm."

Looking more closely at the form, Feodor discovered that it was the girl who had that day flashed him the warning glance.

"Do you know where you are?" she asked.

"No!" replied Feodor. "But wherever I am, I

wish I were out of it ; I grow more and more afraid every hour."

"You have good cause," answered the girl. "Do you not know that you are the guest of the devil?"

"The devil!" cried the youth. "The——"

"Hush! Yes!" said the girl, adding jeeringly. "What fools you youths seem to be. I suppose the same bait snared you: you wanted a bride, no doubt. You nearly got one to-day—one you would never have appreciated. She has already killed two husbands. It was well for you that you took my warning." She patted the trembling and terrified Feodor on the arm. "However," she went on more gently, "you can escape even yet. To-morrow, when you choose your bride, you must choose me. I am the only one kept here through no evil-doing of my own. For that reason I would not bow to Sammaël. If, therefore, you choose me, he must let us both go. The others are the devil's own property, and if you touch one of them you are doomed to become like those silly, dumb youths who have been waiting upon you. Will you do as I ask?" she demanded.

"Gladly," answered Feodor, who during the girl's speech had recovered himself. "I will just look out for you, and touch you as soon as I see you."

"Oh, you dolt," cried the girl impatiently. "How ready all you men are to jump before you reach the stream, and so fall in it. To-morrow every one of us will change shape with another. Not even I know what I shall look like."

Feodor's face fell. "Then we're lost," he cried.

"Not so, if you will listen. Even the devil can be outwitted. I will make a tiny mark close by the side of my mouth. Look closely, and choose only the girl with that mark. Take care also not to let the devil know that you are aware who he is."

"That I will do," cried the peasant eagerly. "But



tell me," he went on, " how did you come to be here ? Were you looking for a husband ? "

The girl blushed, though Feodor did not see it, and darted him an angry look.

" I will tell you nothing," she said sharply, " and I must go at once."

She glided out of the room, and not long after the twelve scarlet-clad attendants came to rouse Feodor. Knowing that they were formerly youths like himself, bent on the same quest that had attracted him, he looked at them curiously, and with interest ; but the same spell that kept them silent seemed also to keep him dumb in their presence.

Once more a sumptuous meal was spread, and the devil exerted himself to charm and please his guest : yet Feodor, looking upon his host, felt the force of his knowledge of Sammaël's true character rush over him. His knees knocked together and his teeth rattled like the clatter of hailstones on a hard road. The devil, however, seemed to notice nothing. At the conclusion of the meal the twelve maidens were again brought forward. Carefully the intended bridegroom scrutinized each one. The thick plaits, the sparkling eyes, the soft lips he passed over. As the number to be overlooked grew smaller and smaller, Feodor's heart sank. Had he missed the tiny mark ? Was he doomed to this terrible silent existence ?

At last, as the eleventh maiden stood before him, he perceived to his joy a small black speck resting at the corner of the mouth ; but what made him more sure was the look of anxious hope that flashed from the dark eyes.

Taking the maiden's hand, he turned to the devil and said, " Sir, I choose this maiden, and——"

He had scarcely uttered the words when the devil uttered a snarl of rage. The room became filled with smoke, through which darted copper-coloured flames. All around the handsome ornaments seemed to be

cracking and shivering to pieces. Feodor felt himself dragged along by the girl at his side. He screamed aloud, but relentlessly she forced him on, through flames, through smoke, and through the noise of a discordant, unholy din. Then he remembered no more until he opened his eyes to find himself lying on the border of the lake with the tall forest trees standing round him. His body felt tired, and sore, and bruised ; but, to his joy, the girl he had chosen rested beside him, and at her feet lay a great bulging sack. As he stared at her, she woke, stretched her limbs, and looked around. She sniffed the keen air with a look of intense delight on her face.

" Oh ! " she cried, " I smell the earth, clean, sweet earth again. Air, light, and freedom once more. But come," she added, turning to Feodor, and starting up, " we must go quickly."

Taking his hand, she made him walk away with her, yet keeping their faces towards the lake and their backs to the forest round them, so that they walked backwards.

" Hush," she said, when her companion would have asked her the reason for this strange way of walking. " Hush, they will pursue us."

Indeed, the two had scarcely reached the shelter of the wood when, following a rumbling noise like thunder, there poured out of the lake an uncountable number of imps, obviously seeking something. Carefully they studied the margin of the water, seeking for footprints. Their agitation became violent when they realized that all that they could find were footprints pointing towards the lake. At last, with howls of baffled rage, they sprang, one by one, into the depths and vanished.

Sure at last of their safety, Feodor and the girl began to journey through the forest. On the way she told him her tale. Her name, she said, was Tatiana, and she was the daughter of an old priest of Kostroma.



One day, after the manner of mischievous children, she had teased her father out of patience. At last he shouted at her, "May the devil fly away with you."

That night she was snatched from her bed by a strange winged creature, and, before she could scream, she was whirled away. Ever since that she had lived in the underworld, till she had begun to despair of seeing the light of day again.

"Thanks to you," she added, pressing close against Feodor, "I am once more under the light of the sun."

Footsore and hungry, Feodor and Tatiana at last reached the old hut where Marko and Marusia lived. The little patch of earth that had unwillingly yielded ice-corn had again mingled itself with the forest from which it had been wrested. Feodor marvelled. He had only been away for two or three days—what could have happened? He pushed open the broken door of the hut, and perceived his parents crouching over a few lighted sticks. They started up at his entrance, thinner than ever, ragged and bent.

"Mother," he cried, "Father, what has happened?"

"Feodor!" screamed Marusia. "We thought you dead."

"Dead?" echoed the youth.

"Ay! dead," repeated Marko, taking up the tale. "Three long years we have waited for word from you. See," he added pathetically, "the last handful of wheat. We can neither buy nor borrow—and you, my son, no good luck has befallen you, for you return in older garments than those in which you left us."

Feodor glanced down, and noticed for the first time that he was clad in his old frieze coat and rough boots. He had not thought of this before. His devil-bestowed robes and jewels must have fallen from him as he came up through the lake.

Suddenly he remembered Tatiana.

"See, mother," he cried, "I have brought home my bride. Is she not beautiful?"

"Ay," answered Marusia sadly, "yet how can we feed another mouth? She will starve."

"Not so!" said Tatiana, coming forward and speaking for the first time. "See here, you have not considered that, after the manner of every well-born maid, I bring a dowry."

She dragged forward the sack, and Feodor blushed, for it came to his mind that she had been carrying it all through their long forest tramp.

Letting the mouth of the sack fall open, Tatiana poured out upon the mud floor a wealth of gold, jewels, and wonderful dishes. The onlookers gasped in amazement.

"Go," she said, turning to Feodor, "take this gold piece; buy bread and meat, and let us eat."

Obediently the youth set off on his errand. Vasile the baker swore roundly in astonishment at the sight of the gold piece, for he at once recognized the lost son of the old peasant couple.

It was not long before news of the presence of a whole gold coin spread like wildfire through the little village. Men, women, and children flocked to the hut to look on the returned youth, and on the couple whom, twenty-four hours before, they would have permitted to starve. They commented freely on Tatiana, on her face, her form, her attire, which, like Feodor's, was simple and poor.

Olga Petrovna was there, a trifle more vixenish than ever, since she had failed to secure a husband in the Kostroma Whit-Sunday festival. Even now, however, she tried to secure attention to herself by making cutting remarks about Feodor's bride; but she failed in her object, for the crowd was permitted to see a little of the dowry, and no one of them was proof against the glitter of the gold. With dumb, greedy eyes, they knelt and silently worshipped the precious things set before them.

Feodor told his tale simply, but with a certain pride



—for who can refrain from boasting when danger is past. Tatiana merely smiled a quiet smile full of meaning.

“ Knock out his eye, who remembers by-gones,” quoted Marko, now brave in reflected glory ; “ but take heed, neighbours all, the sight of this wealth is all you will get. Look your fill and begone ! ”

When the last one had departed, the family hoped to be at peace. But the tale spread, and as it spread it grew. People came from all parts—to see the wonderful young couple, so they said—in reality, to get a glimpse of the dowry. Among these visitors was an old merchant—out for business round Kostroma—and a still older priest. The merchant, admitted to the hut, cried out at the sight of the dishes. He seized several of them in his arms.

“ Mine,” he cried, “ mine own. Listen, good neighbours and friends. One day, at dinner, I quarrelled with my wife. I shouted at her in my anger, ‘ The devil take you.’ Alas ! I seized my golden dishes, so lost was I in rage, and flung them at her, and to my horror both she and the dishes suddenly vanished from my sight. Every night my wife haunts my dreams, she threatens me with penalties to come, but now I have my precious golden——”

The old villain’s voice trailed off to a whine, and, hugging the dishes to him, he prepared to walk off with them. Feodor, however, seized him by the shoulders, shaking him till the precious treasure rolled from his arms to the ground. Then, holding the merchant by the collar he shouted, “ The devil fly off with you—go and join your wife.”

The old man was unprepared for this. He had thought to deal only with ignorant peasants. But adventure had widened the youth’s outlook ; he was about to accompany his words with a violent kick when the old priest, who had followed the merchant’s party, came to the door. There he paused and

closely scrutinized the supposed merchant in Feodor's grip. Lifting his hand, the priest made the sign of the Cross, and, as he did so, the writhing figure gave a scream of agony, and, with one violent twist of his body, released himself and fled howling down the road, displaying as he ran an agitated spear-tipped tail.

Surprise held the whole party dumb for a moment, and then the priest entered the hut. Unlike others of his tribe, he took no heed of gold, silver, or jewels. He fixed his eyes on Tatiana, and suddenly taking her hands in his, cried, "My daughter, forgive me."

Satisfied by dint of much questioning that the old man was indeed the girl's father, the family received him joyfully, and his presence enabled the young man to be married at once to his bride.

With the dowry, the family set up as merchants in the city, and, so far as the world knew, lived quiet, peaceable lives, never forgetting that, while it is well to call upon God, it is also wise to avoid irritating the devil.



## WHY WATER TORTOISES ARE LARGER THAN LAND TORTOISES

FORMERLY the kings of Calabar governed all creatures within their territory ; from the footless fish to the many-legged centipede. If the sovereign was strong, peace prevailed ; but, under a weak ruler, the beasts, following man's bad example, wrangled among themselves, till forest and jungle were strewn with dead or wounded animals, shattered trees, and trampled grass.

Therefore, when Eyamba the Wise became king, he determined to enforce order, and proclaimed that all unnecessary fighting must cease. Any man who disobeyed would be executed ; for offending animals, the punishment was death by poisoned arrows, fire, traps, and similar devices.

Knowing that Eyamba could not be trifled with, the beasts reformed so far that they no longer attacked one another, except for the purpose of procuring food.

Nevertheless, many years of quarrelling had soured their tempers, and though regulations were not openly broken, the forest resounded with yelping, snarling, neighing, trumpeting, barking, roaring, bellowing, baying, grunting, spitting, screaming, squealing, squeaking, chattering, crowing, squawking, hooting, screeching, gobbling, quacking, cackling, buzzing, humming, croaking, hissing, rattling, till life was a burden to quiet creatures.

Of all these, the tortoise suffered most, because he is peculiarly silent, peaceable, and fond of pondering undisturbed. For this reason, indeed, he has contrived a small hut, which he carries with him everywhere ; so that, when he chooses, he can retire into it and think quietly.

Owing to this habit of meditation, practised through a very long life, the tortoise, little as he looks it, has become a wise and shrewd beast. At the same time, in spite of his innocent appearance, he is also a bit of a rogue.

One afternoon, Udo, the tortoise chief, was sitting at the mouth of his burrow under a prickly tie-tie palm—a tree favoured by his kind, because it keeps away chattering monkeys and other pests. It so happened that some twenty elephants, following Okuni, a huge tusker, came into the clearing near by, and, after they had fed noisily, began to discuss the jungle doings. Up and down they tramped ; the ground quaked beneath them, and their trumpeting set every leaf astir.

Gradually the tortoise became annoyed, and at the end of several hours he had grown quite angry. Taking advantage of a lull in the hubbub, he crawled from under the tie-tie, placed himself before Okuni, and shouted, “ A word with you, Windbag ! ”

Now an elephant's sight is not very sharp, and, though his huge ears serve him better, he relies chiefly on his keen scent. The monster's little, red-rimmed eyes blinked high overhead, while he snuffed indignantly with outstretched trunk. Guided by the acrid smell of the tortoise, he soon spied Udo.

Swinging his trunk aloft, Okuni thundered, “ Miserable four-footed snail ! how dare you address me so insolently ? ”

“ Lower your tone and your absurd trunk,” replied the tortoise. “ Let me tell you, once and for all, I will endure no more of your noisy gossiping, which is



worse than monkey chatter. Remove yourself and your people at once ! ”

Okuni raised one of his enormous front feet, saying, “ This is my answer ! ”

But the thick, grey pillar thundered on empty ground, for the tortoise had nimbly retreated into the shelter of the tie-tie.

Okuni's trunk probed the prickly tangle to no purpose ; and all the while he could hear his enemy laughing.

“ Listen, Little Wit ! ” called out Udo, “ it is not wise to provoke me further. There is an ant-hill under this tree. I am on good terms with its occupiers, and if you persist in disturbing me I shall ask some of them to crawl up your trunk and devour your brain while you sleep. In this way you are certain to perish miserably by a secret death, the manner of which will baffle Eyamba, so that he will not avenge you. Indeed, nothing but fear of his displeasure prevents me from killing you openly ; otherwise an easy matter, since I am stronger than you.”

Okuni's huge ears stiffened with surprise ; and when he answered, his tone was much less confident. “ Surely the gods have deprived you of your senses ! How can so puny a beast as you pretend to be a match for me, the strongest of all the forest people ? ”

“ Your vanity deceives you,” replied the tortoise. “ Strength is not to be measured by bulk. As I have no relish for one of Eyamba's traps or poisoned arrows, we cannot fight ; but, if you dare, we will have a trial to prove which is the stronger. These are the terms. Let each be fastened to one end of a suitable rope ; then, before witnesses, I shall go down into my bathing pool, while you remain on the bank. At a given signal, you must try to draw me out. That, I wager one thousand ripe yams, you will be unable to do.”

The herd could hardly believe their enormous ears, and some of them thought it was beneath their

leader's dignity to accept so impertinent a challenge. However, after discussion, the trial was fixed for the following day, and the giants departed boisterously.

When Udo retired into his burrow he found his wife in tears. She had been eavesdropping, and cried so bitterly that huge tears splashed into the foo-foo, while she stirred it for their meal. Shrill with anger, she told Udo that the loss of a thousand yams would ruin his family. At this, the youngsters wailed and wept, so that the burrow was uncomfortably damp as well as noisy ; and the tortoise's brother, who happened to be on a visit, declared that only a lunatic could have thought of such folly.

Udo tried to reassure them, saying that he had no fear as to the result, but no one believed him. That night some very wet little tortoises sobbed themselves to sleep ; and the wife, wakeful through anxiety, was almost driven mad by hearing her husband chuckle continually to himself in the darkness.

News of the wager spread over the forest, and, by the next afternoon, the banks of the pool were crowded. Millions of birds occupied the tree tops ; half the lower branches bent under the weight of monkeys, packed close as dates in a cluster. Below, jostled herds of animals, overtopped by great grey shapes, the elephant clan ; and the hot air rang with every jungle sound.

Near the edge of the pool stood Okuni, waiting for the tortoise, who presently crawled up, accompanied by his brother. Between them they were carrying a long, stout rope of tie-tie fibre, stolen from a riverside village.

The leopard had been asked to umpire. He fastened one end of the cable about the elephant's neck, the other round that of the tortoise ; called for silence, and gave out the conditions. Udo was to dive in, and, when ready, jerk the rope thrice as a signal the tug might begin.





Okuni thundered, "Miserable four-footed snail ! how dare you address me so insolently ?"

These matters settled, Okuni turned his back to the pool, into which the tortoise plunged. Countless eyes—black, yellow, grey, green, blue, golden, silvery—watched him disappear; and as the waters smoothed themselves out, all, even the monkeys, were silent. Thrice the rope shook, and the elephant, standing squarely with his head turned backwards, saw the umpire's paw flash aloft as a signal that all was ready. At once Okuni flung his whole weight into the pull, the cable tautened so suddenly that the leopard was jerked into the air, but righted himself nimbly, and stood, glaring, near the tense rope.

The struggle had begun!

When the water closed on him, Udo swam towards a deep hollow, across which, as he knew, lay a great sunken tree. Round this he tied the cable, then, after giving three strong jerks, settled himself on the slime to watch the result. Above him, in the green dimness, quivered the straight, dark bar of hawser, scaring every fish and water-beetle. The heavy trunk stirred in its bed; once it lifted, but only to settle again in the upchurned ooze; then suddenly the rope slackened and sank to the bottom of the pool.

Quickly untying the end, Udo gripped it between his jaws and scrambled out into the sunshine. A storm of mingled cries saluted him, for a strange thing had happened!

At the signal, Okuni had flung all his weight and sinew into the pull. Head pressed between his forefeet, great ears twitching, hind legs braced straight behind him, he had felt the rope take the strain, and slowly yield, so that he had been able to advance a step. Full of exultation, though wondering at the strength of his little opponent, he had once more hurled himself forward. But now the cable, having stretched to the utmost, gave no further. In spite of all his efforts, Okuni could not advance the breadth of a blade of grass. Goaded by fear of defeat, he made a final



effort ; the hawser snapped, and Okuni turned a complete somersault between his vast outspread ears.

The giant scrambled to his feet, and stood quivering with shame and deafened by gusts of sound, above which rang the impertinent bark of the monkeys, who swung and gambolled aloft, gibbering delightedly, till their fierce enemy, the leopard, climbed a tree and cuffed a dozen of the mockers into terrified stillness.

All the lesser animals congratulated Udo, but the larger ones held sulkily aloof, and departed, following the example of Okuni, who slunk off in silence with his tribe. Elephants are honourable beasts, and, in spite of the danger run by those who broke Eyamba's strict laws against theft, next morning a thousand ripe yams lay piled round the tie-tie palm, while the unfortunate cultivators of the neighbourhood were vainly endeavouring to discover who had robbed their plantations.

This victory increased Udo's influence as much as it diminished that of Okuni, who, although he remained, next to Eyamba, lord of the jungle, was the object of much mockery. The monkey tribe was particularly offensive. Relying on their agility, they ventured to jeer at the stately tuskers that grazed below.

Now Isantim, the hippopotamus, and his people had always been friends of the elephants, partly because they were distant relations, and also for the reason that, as one tribe lived on land and the other in pools, lakes, or rivers, there was no rivalry between them. He therefore felt the slight put on Okuni, especially as the monkeys took pains to inform him that Udo was boasting he could outdive any hippopotamus in Calabar.

This report worried Isantim so much that the juiciest river plants hardly tempted him to feed. As he wallowed in the mud he often murmured : " Stone Coat must be mad ! I have met him in the water, and

his pace was a mere crawl compared with mine. The reptile is beneath my notice."

For all that, whenever he thought of the tortoise, Isantim snorted uneasily, till the sunlit ripples surrounded him with glittering circles.

One day, as the hippopotamus was floating in his favourite haunt, a deep creek by the river, Udo appeared on the bank, and shouted insolently: "Greetings, Isantim! You grow fatter every day! Perhaps you hope that, by so doing, no jaw will be wide enough to gain a purchase on you; for certainly, if you were attacked, you could not save yourself by speed or nimbleness."

Isantim opened his vast pink mouth and laughed. "Forgive me, Friend Bandy Legs," he said with mock politeness, "but your words amuse me, seeing that on land you are none too speedy, and still less so in the water."

"Come, come! Floating Gourd!" replied Udo jauntily. "Though I do not pretend to swim as fast as an alligator, I can beat you with ease, especially at diving."

Isantim laughed again, but in a very half-hearted fashion.

"Listen!" continued the impudent reptile. "You deserve, and shall receive, a lesson. I am going home to feed my family, but propose to return before long, and make good my words, by challenging you to dive across this creek for one thousand ripe yams a side. As I am not ill-natured, and have no wish to shame you in public, I suggest we decide the matter quietly, without any spectators."

"Agreed!" answered the hippopotamus faintly. "You will find me here."

The tortoise shuffled off. Isantim waded out of the creek, and lay down in the mud to rest, so that he might be fresher for the coming trial. It was in vain that he endeavoured to reassure himself; he grew



more and more nervous, and snorted so loudly that even the flies did not venture to approach him.

After the midday meal Udo called on his brother, and led him a little way into the forest. The two had been hatched from the same clutch of eggs, and, even when they stood side by side, it was almost impossible to tell them apart. Udo spoke in a whisper. As he did so the brother nodded approval, and at last laughed aloud.

“Silence!” said Udo hastily. “Reserve your mirth for this evening. You must be off at once. I shall give you an hour’s start; and mind you keep under cover as much as possible.”

The brother left at a brisk pace. Udo rested awhile before returning to the creek, where he found Isantim sprawling on the mud in the sunshine. As soon as Udo appeared, the hippopotamus came lumbering ashore. His little, dull eyes rolled uneasily in their bulging sockets.

Side by side they stood on the bank, which faced westwards, so that the sunset, striking full in their eyes, dazzled them, and they could hardly look at the glare of the water.

“There is no time to lose,” remarked Udo. “If you are ready, let us begin. Now as to the conditions. The first across to yonder palm wins. Secondly; once we are below the surface, neither is to rise above it till the other side is reached. Whoever does so, loses. In this matter we must, of course, rely on each other’s honour.”

“Exactly,” grunted Isantim. “But what about the start?”

“Why,” answered the tortoise, “suppose you say, ‘One, two, three, off!’ At the last word, in we go. Are you ready?”

Isantim thrice filled and emptied his huge lungs, barked out the signal, took a vast breath, clashed his jaws together, and hurtled through the rushes, dis-

appearing under a heave of water that washed up the bank to the very grass. Great ripples broadened across the creek; after which the surface relapsed into oily stillness.

Udo dived also, but, once below, instead of heading across, turned about and came up noiselessly in a bed of tall reeds, among which he lay securely screened.

Meanwhile Isantim wallowed on at top speed deep under water. It was such a long dive that his chest was near to bursting when he felt the bottom under his feet, and, through a wash of liquid mud, lurched ashore into the shadow of the trees on the farther bank.

There, fronting him, stood the tortoise, quite unruffled. At once the odious reptile cried—

“I am glad you have turned up at last. Positively, I began to fear you were drowned, and the thought of your bereaved family was distressing me.”

Dumb and breathless, Isantim glared at his conqueror, who continued—

“I presume you do not care for a second trial. Ah! I thought not. As it is a warm evening, I shall dive again for the sake of coolness. My poor, stout friend, when you have rested, float over at your leisure. You will find me waiting.”

With a splash, he disappeared in the twilit creek. After a while, Isantim paddled back dejectedly and floundered out, uttering so deep a sigh that the mud quivered, for there, on the grass, the tortoise sat composedly in the dim light.

“Convinced, I think,” he called out to the shame-faced monster. “But how, in the name of probability, did you imagine that, with such a build as yours, it was possible for you to beat me? I am sorry you are tired. As for the yams, let us say no more about them. If you were detected stealing them—and you are not a dexterous thief, like the elephant—a poisoned arrow would be your lot. I should grieve to have your death on my conscience. Besides, speaking frankly, so many



of poor Okuni's pilfered yams are left, that my people are tired of that fare. Pleasant dreams to you ! ”

Isantim tramped disconsolately to his lair by the river. All night he rolled and splashed among the reeds, with star-gleams atwinkle on his puzzled, sleepless eyes.

The victor walked some distance, and then halted for an hour or so ; at the end of which time another tortoise came shuffling through the twilit gloom. They greeted each other warmly.

“ Splendid, brother ! ” said Udo. “ You played your part well. Between us we might form a little Egbo society\* which would rule the forest, just as that of the men governs their fellows. I promise you a good supper and a hundred ripe yams ; but we had better return separately, for fear any inquisitive eyes should be spying on us.”

A few days later, impressed by their experiences, Okuni and Isantim begged the tortoise to dwell with them, and protect them against their enemies. At first Udo refused, but they pressed him, and finally he decided to live with the elephants on land, suggesting that, as he could not be in two places at once, his brother should inhabit the water with the hippopotamus.

The proposal was accepted, and worked well ; but, as fish is more plentiful and sustaining than berries or other forest produce, in course of time it came about that water tortoises have developed into a much larger and plumper breed than the land variety ; and so, in all likelihood, they will continue to be.

\* A West African secret society that tyrannizes over certain districts.

## THE HORSE-HEADED PRINCE

LONG years ago, somewhere in the district where now stands the pleasant town of Setubal, a king and queen reigned over a happy and devoted people. Rich valleys fragrant with scented shrubs lay under the glance of the roving sun. Here one saw the verdure of orange and lemon groves. In the spring the lavish hands of Nature cast showers of white and pink blossoms on the eager branches of the fruit trees, and almond, pear, and cherry orchards stood like brides veiled for the coming of their lords. Birds of bright plumage darted hither and thither, singing at whiles their carol of praise for the beauty of the year. Out of the verdure of the valleys rose peaks of rocks coloured red, and grey, and purple. That part of Portugal was truly a land of warm and varied colours, where it seemed as if some goddess straying from heaven had dropped a garment of brilliant hues amid the barren districts enclosing the joyous kingdom.

The people of this realm shared in the gay moods of Nature. As their eyes drank in the variety of colours lying all around them, from the distant peaks cutting the sky like the jewelled edges of some vast coronet fashioned with opals, amethysts, garnets, and sapphires, something of the glow of their little world entered the hearts of the beholders, and they too reflected the glory of the pageantry that swept through these valleys with the passing of the seasons. Their cares fled as easily as the glittering water slips



over the surface of the ragged rock. "Better to bow than to break," was their proverb.

Their main troubles were the curse of flies in summer, the necessity of guarding their property, and the visitation of mist and rain in winter; yet was not the siesta sent by a good God specially to comfort man against the flies? While as for the weather—well, when God pleased, it rained in every wind; but four walls and a fire offered comfort even at the worst of times, provided that marriage had left a shred of peace in the home. Property was another matter. Still they would say comfortably: "My key at my girdle keeps me good and my neighbour also." Besides, were there not always oil and garlic, and cod-fish cooked in oil? Truly, even in winter one can find pleasure if one seeks with insistence.

Now the king and queen of this happy people were in all things themselves happy, save one, namely, that they had no son to bless their union. Daughters they had received from Nature's eccentric bounty, but, as yet, the greatly desired gift of an heir to the throne had been withheld.

Then, on a day when the queen was wandering in the palace grounds, an old woman, ugly as only an old woman can be, suddenly appeared from the side of some grey lichen—herself as grey and misshapen as the growth by which she had stood—and said in croaking tones—

"I know your thoughts, O Queen. Daughters talk and dress much, but a son may be moulded to obey a mother's governance until a wife takes over the charge, and so nothing is lost. You can marry a son when you please, a daughter when you can. Fear not. You shall give birth to a son—with the head of a horse."

Having uttered these words, she disappeared as it were into the greyness of the tall lichen standing near and was never seen again.

In due course it happened as the old woman had foretold. A prince was born, perfect in every respect, but his head that of a horse—ears, eyes, mouth, mane, and all. His voice was human, soft and sweet. But, nevertheless, this affliction bitterly wounded the hearts of his parents, who at first wept when they saw the twitching ears of the young colt and watched the loose skin pucker freely when the flies settled upon its hairy surface. Besides, when the sturdy little limbs of the prince lay in bed hidden with sheet and coverlet, it might as well have been some equine creature, and nothing at all human.

However, they say “marry and grow tame,” and it is true of everything, that what grievously afflicts us at first becomes, as the years pass by, just an ordinary circumstance. At last even the king and queen became accustomed to the sight of the horse’s head, and so life went on till the day arrived when it was fitting and proper that the prince should marry.

It was at that point the first real difficulty arose. A father and mother, or indeed brothers and sisters, may grow accustomed to some obnoxious feature or quality belonging to a member of a family, but outsiders do not gaze with the same trained eye.

As soon as the royal pair offered their son in marriage to some eligible young woman she would toss her head in disdain. Occasionally an outspoken person would say, “What! become the wife of a man with the head of a horse and, perhaps, the mother of horse-headed children! ‘Marry, marry,’ sounds well, but tastes ill. Truly I might as well offer to reign over a stable.”

Thus grief settled upon this royal family reigning over the gay kingdom, and from royal sadness was born a sorrow that spread throughout the land,



afflicting high and low. Yet what could be done for this unhappy prince? The king published a proclamation that, if any maiden, high or low, rich or poor, would accept the hand of his son he would confer upon her gifts—jewels, clothes, wealth—such as fell but rarely to the lot of any bride. But his offer reached unwilling ears. She who loves an ugly man thinks him handsome, but it requires a strong imagination to see human features in the outline of a horse's head.

For a long time this state of affairs continued, and then, one day, a very poor girl presented herself before the king and queen and said that she would marry the prince. They reminded her of the sad affliction of their son; but she remarked that she had already seen him, and, moreover, was sorry for him. Her reason for marrying the prince was not to gain his wealth, but to comfort him in his sorrow. She was content to have just enough to live upon if she could bring relief to the hearts of their majesties and joy to the stricken young man, their son.

Then a measure of happiness came to the palace and its inhabitants. The news spread through the realm like a ray of sunshine on a foggy day. Great festivities were announced. Races were arranged. In the towns gladness rippled over the crowds of people thronging the streets. Even at the iron-grated windows of the prisons this wave of relief seemed to take effect, for the prisoners, sunning themselves at the bars, were so touched by the news that one ceased to quarrel with his wife; another, who was courting a sweetheart, did so with even greater zest, knowing that his was the head of a man; a third, who was leaning out libelling his enemies while, at the same time, he begged from every passer-by, ceased to dangle his basket for bread and meat and coins, and shouted out for very joy that the maiden who was going to marry his prince was a heroine worthy to be the

sister of himself, Manuel, the wrongfully imprisoned and unjustly treated Manuel.

Now we may be certain of one thing, that joy is never completely universal. There are always those who, for some reason, cannot enter into the general chorus of thanksgiving. While gossip, and dance, and song swelled and eddied in the towns and villages; while Carlos, in clean shirt with a large silver stud at his neck and his black felt hat on his head, slung his guitar on his shoulders and made off to the nearest threshing-floor; while Maria donned her gayest dress and hastened the preparations for the cooking of the Bacalhao, the three elder sisters of the brave young bride felt no gladness in their hearts, and they let poor Anna experience the state of their feelings.

“What,” cried one, “marry a man with a horse’s head! You bring disgrace to the family. But the time will come when you will resemble the woman who said to the people, ‘It is nothing; they are only killing my husband.’”

“Ah!” sneered another, “where there is little bread one has to eat fruit; we can afford to wait for husbands. Moreover, think of the queen and her daughters. She is well married who has neither mother-in-law, nor sister-in-law.”

“Truly,” said the third, “every one sings as she has the gift, and marries as she has the luck. But oh! a man with a horse’s head. Fancy his kisses! She has avoided the fly and swallowed a spider.”

Now some of this may have been annoyance; but alas! most of it was due to jealousy. For with the proclamation of the betrothal, gifts in abundance—silks, jewels, and money—arrived almost hourly from the grateful king and queen. Moreover, the young prince came with his courtiers every day to visit his future wife; and, while he was overjoyed at the prospect of matrimony, so long and cruelly withheld, his courtiers for their part were not unable to





A very poor girl presented herself before the king and queen.

show their disdain for the three elder sisters, who, dressed in the poor robes of a peasant family, looked and acted as ignorant persons of that class. It was only Anna in that family who had the grace that comes with gentleness and the fine courtesy born of compassion. Hence these taunts, which were clearly the offspring of ill-will and jealousy.

The day before that chosen for the ceremony had arrived, and along the road came riding the brilliant cavalcade of courtiers. Their duty on this occasion was to convey to Anna the assurance of the love of the king and queen, and to inform her that before midday on the morrow a becoming equipage would be sent to convey her to the palace. Anna's eyes searched in vain for her horse-headed lover. She failed to see the now familiar features, but instead of the well-known form, at the rear of the horsemen rode an exceedingly charming young man, evidently a knight of high degree.

Seeing her gaze rest upon this handsome youth as the cortège was moving off on its return to the palace, the three sisters began their shrill reproaches. Stung by these into an indiscretion for which she paid dearly, Anna, looking more closely than ever at the splendid youth, and believing that in the outline of his figure she could trace a certain resemblance to her lover, called out in a yearning voice: "My prince! It is my prince!"

The sisters looked at her in amazement; then the eldest of them slapped her on the face. They all laughed loud and shrill.

"That's likely," they cried. "If that were your prince, why did he ride by in silence with never a word to you? No. Your lover has got his head buried in a nose-bag somewhere, and is munching good dry oats, and twitching his ears to keep off the flies."

Anna turned away, and went to sit by herself under



a tree in the garden. As she sat thus, thinking of the past and wondering about the future, puzzled all the while as to the handsome youth who rode close behind the group of horsemen, for she earnestly believed him to be Pedro, a great crow came wheeling over the tree and cawing lustily. So persistent was the bird that, at last, Anna's attention was closely drawn to it.

"What is your trouble, poor crow?" she asked, for she was as gentle and kindly as her sisters were harsh and cruel.

At these tender words the bird dropped through the air with his shining pinions folded against his body, and swooped lightly to a branch just above her head. There he stood perched among the leaves, with his beady eyes glancing at Anna as she sat under him.

The girl thought this was strange behaviour in a crow; but she said nothing more, for she did not wish to alarm the creature. After the bird had stood thus for a time, glancing now at Anna, now at the house, and twisting its head here and there as though to take a thorough scrutiny of the neighbourhood, it began to caw again, but in some strange manner the raucous sound of the caw seemed to fade away until it became merged in the dulcet tones of a beautiful human voice. Anna sat up astonished, hearkening to this wonderful change. She remained thus, all attention, while the crow, still taking stock of the garden and its surroundings, spoke as follows:

"Do not be alarmed, beloved, but know without doubt that I am your Pedro, who loves you dearly. However, try to sit as though you were by yourself, for I am fearful about those gadflies, your sisters. They appear in public with the rosary in their hands, but I know quite well how the devil lurks in their hearts. Their faces are but thin cloaks to the ugliness of the souls beneath. So sit still and listen.

"Since my birth I have been overshadowed by a mysterious fate. The old woman who foretold my

coming was connected, somehow or other, with powers that have ruled my destiny ; but I believe that freedom will come when you have the courage to marry me. It was near at hand, but, alas ! without your knowing what you did, you have thrust it away. This morning, quite suddenly, as I was putting food to my mouth, my appearance changed. I ceased to be a horse-headed man and sat there a normal being. No one was by at the time ; but I heard distinctly a voice murmuring these words : “ If you pass by her doors without comment, the spell is broken ; but if she says a word to you, worse will befall.”

“ Of course, every one in the palace was delighted at the change, but I was heavy-hearted. I knew that I must appear before you to-day, and endeavour to do so without a word being spoken by you to me. You are aware how silent I kept behind the other men. You know how your sisters stung you into speech. The result you can see for yourself. I am no longer allowed to keep even a fraction of a human being's shape. Almost as soon as we left your presence, this change took place, and my brave knights have gone to carry the ill news to my poor parents. Anna, have you the courage to go on with this sad struggle ? ”

“ My prince,” replied Anna, turning her head away from the house as she spoke, “ you know that I love you, and even if it means fighting till I die, I am yours in all things. Can you doubt it ? ”

“ Brave Anna,” murmured the crow. “ We say in our speech, ‘ Beware of a bad woman and do not trust a good one ; ’ but here and now I place my very life in your dear hands. Listen earnestly. For the time, owing to your hasty but natural action, you have lost me. If you desire me—if you wish to save my life and protect our happiness—you must journey to the Crows' Tower, and the way must be trodden in iron shoes. It is useless to attempt to go in ordinary shoes. They *must* be made of iron. When



at last you have arrived at the tower you must lie in wait and discover which of the crows I am. Without regard to any circumstances, you must seize me and hold my wings in your hands. Then, and then only, will the spell be broken. I shall at once come back to human form, and we shall be free to marry. But if your courage fails you—if you break any of these conditions—look to see your Pedro no more in this life, for he will have passed for ever into the hands of those who controlled his sad earthly fate.”

Having uttered these words, the crow dropped from its perch, and, with one light touch of the beak upon the girl's head, rose into the sky, then, cawing lustily, sped its way over vineyard and orchard, over orange groves and blue water, out towards the sandhills where once stood Troia, the lost town.

The girl watched its flight eagerly, for it gave her a clue as to her direction. The moment her eyes ceased to trace the black speck in the blue of heaven, she rose, and, having taken some of the jewels given her as a gift by the king and queen, she stole unseen from the house, and hid herself all that afternoon and evening. At dusk she made her way to the blacksmith's forge that stood not far from their house. Here she found rest and shelter, for the wife of the smith was a woman of few words and one who had always befriended her, and now the sadness of Anna's face touched her heart. The next morning, having vainly endeavoured to persuade her kindly hosts to accept some recompense, she asked the smith if he would fashion for her a pair of iron shoes. The man looked at her in amazement.

“Iron shoes!” he exclaimed—“iron shoes for a human being! If it had been the poor prince, now, who made that request, I could have understood; but iron shoes for a pretty young woman like yourself! It seems out of the question. Can feminine vanity be fading from the hearts of its owners?”

Anna smiled at his pleasantry. "Nevertheless, friend blacksmith, please do what I ask, and I will reward you handsomely."

Won by her smile, the man bade her rest till evening, and, as soon as he was alone, he set to work to make what she required. Having been in the wars against the Infidels he knew a great deal about armoury, and, when Anna came into the smithy as the shadows were falling over the earth, the honest fellow put into her hands a pair of shoes, which, although they were heavy, were yet quite serviceable, since they were made of thin sheets of metal that glided smoothly over one another and responded to the movements of the foot. Seeing this excellent piece of craftsmanship, Anna put several gold pieces into the man's hands, and immediately donned her new shoes. They fitted quite well, and seemed reasonably comfortable.

"Thank you, my honest friend," she said. "I hope some day hereafter to reward you still further. Meanwhile, farewell, for I must now set out on my journey."

The smith merely said, "'Tis well, my daughter. Who faints not, achieves," and then stood staring at her as she moved away against the glow of the evening sky.

He looked at the gold coins, and shook his head. "There's more in this than meets the eye," he murmured. "Well, 'tis a sweet lass, and I wish her well in her journey. I dare swear there's love at the end of it. As for me, every pig has its Martinmas, and I've earned enough to-day to enable me to rest for a whole month." He went to his house, and drank off two pints of wine to celebrate the occasion.

And now Anna resolved to sleep in no house, and to lose not one moment till she had achieved her purpose. "Great boast, small roast," she murmured to herself.



Knowing that her tongue had lost for her the joy of her lover's companionship, and caused him to suffer in the form of a crow, she resolved to release him as soon as ever she could do so. On she journeyed by day and by night over sand dunes, over wide red moorlands resembling great sheets of rusted iron, through vast tracks of treeless, barren waste, seeing afar off the peaks of Arrabida towering shoulder by shoulder away to the great restless ocean in the west. On the hills the vines stood like so many serpents wriggling their dark forms up the poles to open their thirsty mouths for air. Crops drooped dry under a relentless sun glaring from a copper-coloured sky. Not a song from a labourer, not a merry note from a bird reached Anna's ears, for the air was heavy and men crept dully about their daily task, and the feathered creatures, save for some dark-plumed buzzard, preferred to live in happier regions. By night a smoke mantle of haze hung closely about the ground, and through its heavy folds one could only just catch a glimpse of stars in the sky. A dreary land, and a dreary journey for one whose heart was already sad and sick by reason of hope deferred.

Several days and nights had passed wearily by, and the girl's shoes had begun to shine because of the polish they had received in her persistent travel through sand and over stony ground, when late one evening Anna came suddenly to a hut standing by the foot of a gnarled old tree whose branches against the pale glow of the dying sunset looked like the legs of a great spider hanging in its web. Feeling the need of a little rest and refreshment, she decided to apply for these, so she knocked distinctly, although somewhat timidly, and awaited an answer. The crazy door was drawn open on its rasping hinges by an old beldame who croaked, "Come in, come in, princess-to-be. Come to my hut and learn your task."

Cheered by this, Anna willingly entered the hut,

and the bowed old creature put before her honey, bread, and milk, which she ate with a relish. When she had fed, her aged hostess rose from her place by the feeble fire, and spoke as follows :

“ Daughter of hope and child of love, learn now that I am the mother of the South Wind. Without knowing what you are doing, you are nevertheless travelling under the direction of those who guide your course skilfully. Your lover is in the hands of the enemies of nature. Only from the four winds of heaven can you learn whither to go and what to find. For, while tiny man sees but little of the great world in which he lives, the air he breathes wanders incessantly over the earth’s wide breast, and the eye of the sun reads the pathways of the winds. Fear not, I shall call my offspring, the South Wind. To you he will be invisible, and, perhaps, unheard ; but by me, who behold him clearly, his voice will be fully understood. Hearken a while.”

She beat thrice on the floor of the hut, and turned on her finger the thin thread of an old ring. As she did so a low moaning sound swept round the corners of the hut, the weather-beaten building rocked to and fro, the door burst suddenly open, and the embers on the hearth leapt into flame.

“ Enter, O Son of the South,” cried the old woman in a quavering voice. “ Welcome to your mother’s home. Rest awhile and answer as I make question.”

Anna could catch only a sort of throbbing sound, although she felt the pressure of a something that stirred her garments and lifted the strands of hair upon her face. Then came silence.

In the midst of the hush the old creature continued : “ Tell me, son of mine, where is the Crows’ Tower ? ”

At these words a whirlwind swept across the interior of the hut, and Anna felt herself lifted up on her feet and twisted as though she were a sort of top. A deep humming sound accompanied this movement..



“Good!” cried the old woman. “You have pleased me, O my son; now take the fair girl, and lead her on her way to my sister, who is mother to the North Wind. For, as you tell me, he must next conduct her on her journey!” Then, turning to Anna, she said, “Go, and fear not; we are your friends, and wish you well.”

She led Anna to the doorway, and thrust her gently outside. As the girl’s feet came in contact with the earth, a gust of wind caught her and impelled her forwards, not roughly but forcibly, never ceasing to direct her in what was clearly a well-known path, up hill, down dale, almost lifting her at times, but always filling her with elation and exhilaration that were new to her heart. This continued till she found herself standing at the door of another hut almost exactly like the one she had left.

The power that had led her forward now suddenly failed. But Anna knew her task. She lifted her hand, and knocked lightly. A high, thin voice bade her enter.

Thrusting open the door, she obeyed the summons. An old woman sat crouching over a feeble fire.

“Ah!” she croaked, “so they have brought you to me. Rest while I summon my son, the North Wind.”

Anna sat upon the floor. The mother of the North Wind took a stick, and made a sign upon the hearth. “Come, then, son of mine, but be gentle in your approach.”

A terrific clatter arose that rattled the planks of the building as though they were loose scales on a monster’s back. The flames sprang up on the hearth; Anna’s clothes rustled violently; the shawl upon the old woman’s shoulders flapped like a sheet upon the clothes line; the door burst open with tremendous violence.

“Peace! peace!” cried the parent of this tur-

bulence. "Remember we are feeble and frail. Tell me, whither must our guest be sped?"

For answer, shrill whistles poured through cranny and chink, keyhole and chimney. Anna felt herself lifted as in strong arms, set down upon the road outside, and then hustled along like a straw upon a river. Behind her she could hear her old host crying, "Be gentle with her. Farewell, princess, and fear nothing."

Away they went, sweeping round corners, mounting over rocks, hurrying through forests and across streams. All along their pathway a vast cloud of dust heralded their approach. Where they passed, branches of the trees snapped and fell crashing to the ground. A noise like the beating of the surge upon the beach for ever rose as the powerful North Wind tore headlong in his passionate journey. Thus amid uproar and whirling confusion they sped swiftly along till all of a sudden they stood beside a dwelling built of stones perched upon a mountain slope. An old door swung to and fro upon its rusty hinges.

Anna knocked. A voice shrilled, "Enter, princess, loved one of the winds." She obeyed.

Inside the dwelling and near to a great cupboard stood a white-haired old woman, whose rheumy eyes looked dreamily at Anna's young form. "Ah!" crooned the aged dame, "so they have brought you to me, the mother of the East Wind."

"Yes, dear lady," murmured Anna.

At these words the mother of the East Wind smiled with satisfaction.

"As gentle in reality as she is by report," she said. "Good. Then we'll lose no time. Come hither, son of mine, lord of the Eastern realms."

She rapped upon the cupboard door as she spoke. The two wings burst open immediately, and Anna felt herself driven back against the wall.

"Calmly! calmly!" ordered the old mother.



“Remember you are not out in the desert or sweeping the wild billows with your vast strength. Take her in your arms gently, and lead her towards her lord—you know the path.” Then turning to Anna, she said, “Till the time when you lie in the arms of your prince fear not to lean upon the breast of my faithful son.”

At these words Anna was lifted and borne from the hut. Her feet scarcely touched the ground, so swiftly, so lightly, she moved upon her way. Before her approach the trees bowed in homage to her companion; clouds sped across the sky to be her canopy; great winged creatures swept down from their eyries in the mountains to race along with her, and all around her was the bustle of a mighty tumult, as if, that night, all the life of nature was abroad to assist in the journey of the great lord who was her servant.

And now they sped towards a little valley that, in the dawn, appeared before them. Beauty lay asleep in its hollows, crowned with the garlands of summer; orange and lemon groves afforded rich greenery to curtain its slopes; at the sides towered red and purple rocks sheltering its quietness from the noise of the world beyond. The East Wind stopped and bowed in homage to the lord of this peaceful little kingdom. He placed Anna before a cottage covered with rose-clusters, and fragrant with the scent of a hundred flowers that bloomed in the brilliant garden around its walls.

“Here,” said he, “my task ends. Behold the dwelling of the mother of the West Wind, O princess.”

He swept around in a circle of dust and dried rustling leaves left from the last season’s splendour; then, bowing low before Anna, retired whence he had come.

Anna knocked gently at the pleasant door. A soft, low voice bade her enter, and, having obeyed its command, the girl found herself in a room warmed by the morning sun and spotlessly clean. A white-

haired old woman, with cheeks ruddy as ripe apples, rose as she stepped into the apartment, and, coming to her, kissed her mouth.

“My son is here, waiting for you. But, before you go, eat and drink, after your hurried journeys to and fro.”

She set grapes, cakes, and wine before Anna, and the girl, nothing loth, partook of the welcome repast. The moment she had finished, the old mother of the West Wind led her gently by the arm to the door.

“Farewell,” she said. “Be happy in your future life, princess-about-to-be-a-queen, and remember kindly the winds of heaven. Take her, O son.” Then, turning again to Anna, she said with serious emphasis, “When the moment comes, seize the largest of the crows and hold it fast.”

And now Anna felt her form embraced as with the warmth of summer itself. She could see nothing, but strong arms were about her, raising her with kindly support, and bearing her steadily forward. Her skin felt soft and silky in the balm of the day, and her heart was beating in accord with the joyous life around her. Her iron-shod feet seemed to lose their weight as she hastened over the soft green pasture of meadows afire with flowers.

Towards midday the Lord of the West placed his charge at the foot of a hill that rose before them, and on its top stood a mighty tower, dark and silent.

“I can do no more,” he whispered in her ear, and his breath was fragrant as a bed of roses. “Yonder is the Crows’ Tower. You must follow your own heart. But I feel that all will be well, and I shall come to your nuptials. You will not see me, but I shall kiss the hair on which your coronet will rest, and for ever I shall be your friend. Farewell, sweet princess.”

She felt him depart, and for a while her heart was lonely. As she stood irresolutely wondering what to



do, a noise in the turrets of the tower claimed her attention. She looked towards the sound, and beheld a vast cloud of black-coated birds rise cawing in the air. In noisy circles they swept around the turrets; then, as though with one accord, and not under any distinct leadership, the creatures clove the air in rapid flight towards the spot where Anna stood. When they had arrived above her head, they cawed with loud acclaim, and, darkening the prime of summer with the flutter of their wings, to a bird dropped to the earth. It was like the settling of a flurry of black snow, and Anna remained in the midst of this dark congregation with her heart beating fast, searching with eager eyes for the largest of the assembly. There must be no mistake.

As she stood anxiously searching, her eyes lit upon one crow that had moved somewhat apart from the others. The moment she saw it she realized its huge size. Compared with its companions it was twice as large as any of them. She moved hastily towards it, and, before the creature could even ruffle a feather, she had seized it, and holding its wings gripped them tightly in her two hands. The crow struggled, but Anna held them tighter; the more the bird strove the closer the girl clung to her capture.

Suddenly, with bewildered vision, she saw that she stood in the middle of a great concourse of richly-clad noblemen, who were bowing low before her as to a queen. Then she felt her hands taken in a strong but gentle grasp, and lifting her downcast eyes she beheld the hands and face of the knight she had admired so much outside her cottage door. The prince, for it was he, stooped and kissed the hands he held in his.

"There need be no delay, O my dear," he whispered. "Here in our presence is a priest. This shall be our palace, and here in this happy land, remote from the painful past, and surrounded by my faithful attend-

ants, all of them, like me, liberated by your faithful devotion, we shall reign happily as king and queen of a great and joyful people."

The wedding took place, amid much rejoicing and splendour.

As Pedro and Anna stood hand in hand before the priest, they were surprised to hear a turbulence arise outside the building. Men's hats and cloaks were lifted and tossed about merrily. People said that from north and south, east and west, suddenly there came a rush of winds, and then it seemed as though these four winds merged into one, and tore round and round the church in which the happy couple stood. When the king and queen heard this they smiled, for Anna had told Pedro of all her adventures; and Anna knew more than that. Just as the coronet was about to be placed on her brow, she had felt a warm touch like a caressing kiss that had lifted lightly a strand of her hair, and then as lightly let it fall again to its proper place. She knew the West Wind had kept his promise.

The royal pair at once settled down to rule their new kingdom. The king quite rightly insisted upon the due punishment of Anna's sisters, so that he dispatched messengers to his father's court, and before long the vicious women were employed closely upon kitchen work in the palace of his parents; and we may be sure that Pedro's mother, knowing all about them, saw to it that they were kept very busy. But the blacksmith who had made those splendid shoes was brought to live near the royal abode of the newly-married couple, and in due course was appointed armourer-in-chief to the king his master.



## THE MOUSE-DEER'S PUNISHMENT

Now there were days, as all wise people know, when men could understand the speech of bird and beast and fish, and when these could understand one another. Had that not been so, however could we have learned tales of the serpent's cunning, the owl's wisdom, and the whale's pride? In the matter of vice and virtue these creatures strongly resemble man, though he looks down upon them as inferior beings. Nicely graded distinctions in modes of address prevailed among furred and feathered creatures as they did among the human race. The orang-utan, or jungle folk, scorned to be addressed as orang-dalam or folk of the forest. Nor would the orang-bûkit, those of the hills, acknowledge equality with the orang-utan. To use so offensive a term as sâkai, or slave, to any bird or beast would be to invite summary punishment from friend or enemy alike.

How do we know all this? Why, in olden times, just as in these days, there were some folks wiser than their fellows: men who could, as it were, lift a curtain and see that which was invisible to other eyes, and hear that which was inaudible to other ears. In that way the stories were harboured and handed down from one generation to another. In one land we hear tales of a fairy bear, in another of a strange falcon that could become a man; but here, in the sunny land of Malay, there is never a piece of mischief done, never a wild trick played upon man or beast

in forest or on seashore, but that the mouse-deer is held to be responsible for it. His name is a byword for cunning mischief.

Picture to yourself a soft blue sea rolling lazily yet restlessly up a strand whose deep golden sand fades off to pale yellow, which in its turn gives place to sand white as a summer cloud, or as the curving lines of foam that seem to be ever trying to lap the trunks of palm trees just beyond their reach. Palm tops wave and whisper among themselves—now wrathfully, as a storm-wind passes over them, now more gently as the evening winds finger their plumed heads. The mango flings out her vivid blooms as a flower-girl displays her wares for sale; while the dark leaves of the mangosteen vie with the graceful foliage and golden fruit of the durian. Every nook and cranny is filled with the beauty and fragrance of flower, spice, and fruit, as though Nature, tired of handing out her gifts, had suddenly flung down upon the sun-soaked soil her whole lapful of treasures. In and out of the underwood flit countless living creatures, and of them all the most active is the mouse-deer, a handsome fellow, not more than a foot in height, slender as a hare, with dappled sides and big, pleading eyes that haunt one with their tender regard. Yet of all rogues he is the greatest, and withal, so fleet of foot that he is scarcely ever caught in his mischief. Besides that, his paws are so deeply cloven that he can climb trees with ease, thus extending his sphere of roguery.

Now there was among one of these mouse-deer families a handsome young buck by the name of Plandok. So clever was he, and so fine a fellow, that all the does for miles round regarded him with languishing eyes. Plandok knew he was a fine and valued fellow, and the knowledge filled him with self-conceit, inspiring him to further mischief.

It would often happen that a man, leaving his day's



provisions in his boat, would return to his hut for fishing-tackle. When he got back to the boat he would find half the rice for his midday meal gone, and the remainder scattered irretrievably over the sand. On looking round for the thief he would see none, until his vision lighted on two big eyes gazing down upon him from the shelter of a lofty tree bough.

"Ah, Plandok!" he would cry, "you wait until I catch you, you wretch. You shall pay for this."

Then the scapegrace animal would scamper away, chuckling softly to himself: "Catch me! Ho, ho! No one catches Plandok so easily. Does he not know all the tricks of his tribe—is he not called the Vizier of the Underwood? Why, the owl from a far-off land blessed him with wisdom as he lay in his nest; and the Great Cat herself, from her jungle, sent him cunning! Who is man, then, that he should catch and punish Plandok, the mouse-deer—yes, and punish him for a few mischievous tricks?"

But Plandok laid aside the wisdom of the owl and relied on the cunning of the cat, till, like one bereft of a valuable limb, he fell victim to his own pranks, and this is how it happened.

One day, as he was playing along the beach, the mouse-deer spied a little boat rocking gently on the edge of the water. It was a dainty little boat, with sail and tiller all complete. Seeing no one round about, Plandok decided to investigate the vessel, and as he did so he was seized with a desire to go on the sea. He had never been out on the rocking waves. It would be a fine experience to smell the sharp, salt breezes and hear the gentle lap of the water round the bamboo sides of the boat as it nosed its way through the wavelets. The craft was bigger than either sampan or canoe, and he could not manage both sail and tiller alone. It would be necessary to seek a companion. He knew also that he had so

often played tricks on his fellows that none would trust him and go sailing with him. Soon, however, his cunning little brain found a way out.

Not far away, in a wood near the sea, was a shallow fringed pool, fed by a gentle running stream, and beside the pool lived a stump-tailed heron. Perhaps it would be more correct to say he lived in the pool rather than that he lived beside it, for he was usually to be found standing on one leg in the water, with the other leg tucked up under his body. In his favourite attitude the wily old bird looked as if he were engaged in permanent religious meditation, but should one insect, one tiny bird, or one foolish fish loiter near him his priestly manner instantly deserted him. With one lightning thrust of his cruel beak the unfortunate prey would be speared and swallowed.

To this gentle bird Plandok made his way. Standing at a considerable distance off, for the mouse-deer respected the sharp beak, the animal cried out: "Friend Bûrong, may I speak with you?"

For a time Bûrong took no notice, but after several repetitions of the call he grunted out: "Well, well, what is it?"

"Fish!" answered Plandok.

"Eh?" came back the sharp query.

"Fish, I said—fish!" cried the mouse-deer again, though at the same time scaling a handy tree, for Bûrong showed signs of activity, and the priestly beak was enough to disconcert any conscience-guilty animal.

"Where?" snapped the heron.

"Not here, of course," said the mouse-deer hastily, "but I know a place where the fish just gather round you, all ready to be swallowed. Indeed, you do not have the trouble of catching them—they swarm to you. You have fish for breakfast, dinner, supper, and——"

The heron, in his anxiety to hear it all, took a step





“Friend Bûrong, may I speak with you?”

forward, almost coming out of his pool on to the dry land, which he hated.

“ Can you bring the place here ? ” he demanded.

“ Indeed, I regret to say I cannot,” answered Plandok politely ; “ but if you will condescend to accompany me, you have but to step across this narrow stretch of woodland and we can sail off to the paradise at once.”

“ Ugh ! ” snorted the heron. “ Got to walk on dirty earth, have I ? You know how I hate that ! I get enough—at least,” he corrected himself hastily, “ I manage to live. Perhaps, dear Plandok, you would go yourself and bring me some specimens of the fish found in the wonderful place, and then, if they suit my taste, I might perhaps induce myself to cross this stretch of wretched land and go with you on your next voyage.”

“ But, friend Bûrong,” said Plandok, in a regretful tone of voice, “ I greatly fear that all the best places will be occupied if you delay much longer. You see, so many of your people like fish, and there are sun-fish, rainbow-fish, eels, skate——”

The wicked little mouse-deer was drawing largely upon his imagination, for he was not sure that these were found in waters about his home. He knew little about fish, and, apart from the shark, even their names had only reached him through tales that he had heard.

“ Well,” said the heron at last, “ I’ll come, but no tricks, mind, or——” and he thrust his beak out towards the mouse-deer, who had descended from his tree.

“ Certainly not ; no, certainly not, dear Bûrong,” responded Plandok hastily, and getting well out of the reach of the beak. “ How could I dare to be mischievous with so reverend-looking a companion as yourself ? ”

They set off, and at last reached the boat, though



the heron grumbled much at his journey over the dry land, and the mouse-deer was compelled to make frequent repetitions of the fishy banquet he had invented.

Bûrong was to look after the sail, while Plandok manœuvred the tiller. The bird was not at all pleased at the sight of the boat, and appeared very nervous.

“Which way?” he demanded, as they embarked.

“Utara, Salatan, Tîmor, Bârat—north, south, east or west,” responded the mouse-deer, waving a careless paw.

They settled at last to go west. The heron stood by the sail. Every time the boat rocked he gave a frightened croak, and flapped his wings wildly. The mouse-deer, on the other hand, settled down very comfortably on a mat by the tiller. The warm sun shone down on him, and, lulled by the gentle swaying of the boat, he soon fell asleep.

Suddenly the boat gave a sickening lurch. The blue waters rose up to meet the anxious gaze and inquisitive beak of the heron. Looking round, he observed Plandok asleep, and shouted angrily—

“Hi, you there! Do you want us both to drown? Get up, you lazy beast, and attend to your tiller. I begin to wish I had never left my pond.”

“Peace, peace, good Bûrong. Think of the fish you are to have,” murmured the mouse-deer, opening only one eye and that dazed with sleep. “I took but a short nap. All is well. Keep the boat straight ahead.”

“Small thanks to you if all is well,” responded the heron tartly. “You do it again, my friend, and I’ll punish you in a way you won’t forget in a hurry.”

“No, no, Bûrong!” jeered the mouse-deer. “Remember that we are both in the same boat, and you cannot get back to your pool without my help in guiding the vessel.”

Plandok quite forgot that the heron could use its powerful wings and reach the shore most easily. However, he swung the tiller so that the boat came back into the wind, and for a few minutes all went well. Then the mouse-deer dozed off again, leaving the boat to its own guidance. A sudden gust again sent it reeling to one side, so that it shipped several sparkling wavelets ere it righted itself. This time Bûrong took matters into his own hands—or perhaps one might better say, his own beak. He addressed the sleeping form of the mouse-deer.

“I’d like to kill you, you mischievous little wretch, but I won’t. You hate being in the water as much as I love it, provided I don’t get into a whole sea of it. Into the water you shall go—you’ll find fish enough for yourself there, I’ll warrant!”

Thereupon the heron set to work and tore a hole in the side of the boat, so that it would not fill with water at once, but in such a manner that every tiny wave that came up would add a little to the water already lying in the bottom of the vessel, and so slowly sink it. Then raising his powerful wings he flapped away to the shore, from which he could still see the little craft.

The water crept slowly into the boat until at last it reached the feet of the sleeping mouse-deer. At first he merely twitched his toes, as if he were in an uneasy dream; but, as the discomfort increased rather than diminished, he suddenly became wide awake. Seeing the water at his feet he looked wildly round, and perceived himself alone in a fast-filling boat. His terrified glance travelled anxiously to the shore, and there in the distance he espied the heron. The latter, seeing his quondam friend in such straits, sent a piercing squawk of amusement across the sun-streaked waters.

“Bûrong, Bûrong, dear Tuan Bûrong,” cried Plandok, using all the strength of his lungs to make his voice carry. “Rescue me! How could you



desert me like this? Have I not promised you fish and fish and fish? Help! Help!"

The heron stood on the yellow shore. One leg was, as usual, tucked away under him, and his body swayed grotesquely upon the other, as he shook with laughter, so that he appeared to be dancing. As the boat sank, he uttered one final piercing squawk and returned to his pool in the wood by the sea.

Meanwhile, the mouse-deer, finding there was no help for it, began swimming feebly towards the land. He had not gone very far when the water round him began to heave and tremble. Throwing a hasty glance about him, Plandok perceived hastening towards him what appeared to be just two terrible rows of teeth set in a great and cavernous mouth. For once his heart seemed to stand still. He knew by these tokens that he had encountered a shark. A second glance, however, relieved him somewhat, for it showed him that the shark was a young one, and he knew that the young are often very foolish and easily led.

"Ah ha!" cried the shark. "Breakfast at last. Not much, it is true—not a mouthful. Still he who cannot have a whale must be content with a sprat."

The shark lunged at the mouse-deer, who managed, by a quick movement of his hind legs, to avoid those cavernous jaws.

"How foolish," said the mouse-deer, in a winning tone of voice. "You would scarcely taste me at all; I'm all bones—hard bones, too. But I'll tell you what, dear friend. You take me to the shore on your back, and I'll pay you so well that you will rejoice ever to have met me."

"Dâgi-mâna; how?" demanded the shark.

A dreamy look came into the mouse-deer's eyes, a look that would have warned a more worldly and experienced person that he was concocting some tale that would not have in it the smallest modicum of

truth. But, as we said before, the shark was very young and unversed in deceit.

"Why," responded Plandok at last, "I know magic. It was taught to me by a cunning serpent in the jungle. Whoever knows this magic can never be killed by his enemy, nor does he require to hunt for food. His enemies fall dead when he looks at them, and as for his food—well, it just comes to him and waits to be eaten. Take me ashore and I will teach you this magic."

"Oh!" cried the shark. "Then how was it, Tuan Plandok, that you did not look at me just as I was about to eat you, and kill me on the spot? Answer me that, if you please!"

"Indeed," answered the mouse-deer hastily, "it happened in this wise. A cruel enemy of mine, Bûrong, the heron, persuaded me to go sailing with him to find fish, for which he is very greedy. When he did not secure any, he grew angry and tore a hole in the boat. He was able to fly, but I got thrust into the water. It was all so sudden that I had not time to say the magic words, and just as I was about to say them, you, my dear preserver, came up."

The wretched little animal was beginning to grow anxious. The water was numbing his limbs, so he put on his most mournful and pathetic expression and gazed into the one eye that the shark's broadside presented to him.

"Dear friend——" he began tearfully.

"Oh, be quiet," snapped the shark irritably, for he was hungry. "I'll take you to the shore, but woe betide you if there is no food when I get there. Get on my back!"

The mouse-deer obeyed with alacrity, and soon the pair drew near the beach. Plandok, who meantime had been thinking deeply, sprang ashore. He hated the clumsy, ugly shark with his two great rows of gaping teeth. He would have eaten the mouse-deer,



would he? Well, now the joke should be turned on himself, for Plandok would eat him. He thought shark-meat might be very dainty fare.

Therefore the wicked animal turned to the shark, and spoke in honeyed accents.

"Be pleased to wait here for me. I have stored the materials for my magic in a hollow tree stump yonder."

"Hurry up then, for I'm hungry," growled the shark, as he drew himself up the beach and sought a sheltered spot under a clump of pine trees.

Nothing could have better suited Plandok's intentions than the position the shark had taken up. He darted into the forest, and in a few minutes returned with a lithe rattan. The shark was dozing to while away the time of waiting. Carefully the mouse-deer wound the rattan round and round the shark's tail, and then attached the loose ends to a stout palm trunk. Just then the shark awoke and made a sudden movement, only to find that he was as tightly fastened to the pine trunk as though he had grown to it.

"What's all this?" he roared, endeavouring to twist himself about.

"Keep still, O Tuan Ikan-yu," murmured Plandok softly, "it is all part of my magic. And so is this," he added, as he struck the shark a violent blow on the head with an axe stolen previously from a native.

"Help," roared Ikan-yu. "Help! this sâkai is killing a noble shark."

"Sâkai, am I?" said the mouse-deer; "then take that, you ugly, clumsy hill of flesh."

He continued battering the poor shark on the head with the axe, until the creature lay quite dead.

"I don't know about your breakfast," said Plandok to the body of the shark, "but here's my dinner for to-day and as many days as it will last. Thank you, Bûrong," he added, making a supercilious bow in the

direction of the heron's pond. "You did me a good turn after all, when you sank the boat under me, but I shan't forget you meant to do me a bad one."

He then proceeded to hack choice pieces from the body of the shark, carrying them away and hiding them one by one. Presently a peculiar smell came up to him on the wind. He stopped work and sniffed sharply.

"Cat!" he muttered at last. "I must look out."

Watching warily, he continued to chop at the shark's carcass until a tiger came into view.

"I said it was a cat," muttered Plandok, dropping the axe and springing up a tree.

"Ugh," grunted the tiger. "I see live meat and dead meat. Both good, but live meat first, I think, since dead meat cannot run away."

So saying the tiger made as if to scale the tree, on an upper branch of which the mouse-deer was perched.

"Tuan Harimau," called down the latter insinuatingly, "Tuan Harimau, I am very hard and tough in myself. I have so little to eat that I am nothing more than a few bones in a bit of skin—no suitable meal for your gracious lordship."

It would perhaps have been better had Plandok made good his escape and left the tiger alone with the remainder of the shark. He was, however, a greedy little beast, and coveted, with all his heart, the few choice steaks still left on the shark's carcass.

"Tuan Harimau," he went on wheedlingly, "if only you will allow me to come down, I will cook you a most wonderful shark meal, and in it I will put the magic the cunning serpent gave me, so that you will never be hungry again. All I require is some drinking water from a pool a few yards yonder, and in a short while you shall have such a meal as you never tasted in all your life before. To fetch me the water, if you will so condescend, ought to give you an appetite for the repast."



Now the tiger was getting old and lazy. It was not now so easy to obtain food in the jungle as it had been when he was young. Indeed, he had to confess to himself that he often went somewhat hungry. The thought of getting a good meal at this time, and a cessation of spasms of hunger in the future, appealed to him as Plandok, who knew the ways of beasts, intended that it should.

"Come down then," he called up to the mouse-deer, "and don't be long about it. I'll take this rice pot," he added, lifting up another piece of property that Plandok had acquired by theft, "and fetch some water."

In a twinkling the mouse-deer was down the tree and was hacking the remaining shark meat from the frame.

Presently the tiger returned, but the mouse-deer was not to be seen.

"Where are you?" roared the tiger. "Where is our meal? I met Bûrong, the heron, at the pool. He is coming as our guest, and he is most anxious to meet you. Come now, where are you?"

The tiger peered round with his half-blind eyes, but could not see any one.

"Tuan Harimau," said a well-known voice at last, "the meat is safe and so am I. Did you really think I was going to give it to a frowsy old door-mat like you? Where is your feeding-bottle, my friend? Did you not remember that you were dealing with Plandok?"

The mouse-deer, perched on a high bough, rocked to and fro with merriment. His mirth was doubled as he saw Bûrong, the heron, striding over the rough earth to his supposed banquet.

"Who laughs last, laughs best, good Bûrong," gurgled Plandok. "How do you like eel and sun-fish and——"

The mouse-deer said no more, for at that moment

anger overcame both the tiger and the heron. With a squawk of rage, the latter rose on his wings and dashed at Plandok; while the tiger, rushing to the tree, flung the whole of his weight against it so that it shook like a reed in a hailstorm. Blinded by the flapping wings and shaken by the swaying of the tree, the mouse-deer lost his hold of the branch and fell sprawling to the ground. The heron also came down, and before the delinquent could regain his balance and make good his escape, the angry bird had caught him in his claws, and was holding him firmly.

"Who is to laugh now? Eh! you dirty little Sâkai—who laughs now?" he demanded.

The beast squirmed in the heron's clutches.

"Please, good Bûrong——" Plandok began, his big pleading eyes full of tears.

"Ah! that's a different tale," said the heron maliciously. "What shall we do with him, Harimau?" he demanded, turning to the tiger.

For answer the tiger lifted his right paw and gave Plandok a buffet on the left side of his face. Then he lifted his left paw and repeated the blow on the right side of the mouse-deer's face. The blows removed the smart eye-teeth of which Plandok was so proud, and completely flattened out of shape the dainty ears. The frightened creature begged and prayed to be released, promising to make all kinds of amends for his behaviour.

"You shall go," said the heron, "you shall go quite free—presently."

So they carried the trembling Plandok to an ant's nest and filled his fine brown fur with these creatures.

"Let him go now, Bûrong," said the tiger. "He will trouble us no more."

"Think twice before you insult your betters in future," added the heron by way of final admonition, as he released the mouse-deer.

Plandok, still more than half-stunned from the



tiger's blows, and tormented to madness by the creatures in his fur, fled blindly into the undergrowth, and came at last to a shallow, sparkling pool. He looked at his reflection in it, and the sight made him weep bitterly. He was well punished. His beauty was gone ! No doe of his tribe would languish for his company now. They would laugh at him instead. Why, oh, why had he been so mischievous ? No eye-teeth to give him the air of a smart villain ! what should he do ? Where hide himself ?

As he wept, he heard a mocking laugh from across the pool, where a heron stood deep in contemplation. With a wail of agony, Plandok fled and was never heard of again, though others of his tribe still play their pranks in the woods of the sunny islands of Malay.

## THE MERCHANT

LONG ago, when green country still lay within sound of the city bells, an orphan, Jocelyn Aylward, was clerk to a merchant in Queenhythe. Taller and more powerful than most of his fellows, few could face him with sword and buckler, or shoot as sure a shaft at the butts. To a lad of such mettle a clerk's life seemed petty and cramped.

On feast days Jocelyn loved to wander across the marshy flats of Finsbury, where, during the week, the sweeps of many windmills circled briskly in the breeze against the racing clouds. Beyond were parks, farmland, and pleasant villages through which he made his way to the northern heights.

Here, seated on the grass, he overlooked a fertile plain, wherein, wall-girt, rose London, then famous as "The White City." Above its hundred spires towered the long, buttressed bulk and lofty steeple of Paul's. Through the city, sweeping eastwards in silver from the grey flicker of osier beds round Peter's Abbey, wound the river of London; far to south, dreamy and alluring, rose faint, lovely hills.

And all this was but a small portion of the world!

Looking down on the wide stream, out of the warehouse windows in Queenhythe, Jocelyn could see a tangle of masts, beyond the gabled Bridge line. There rode many far-travelled ships, whose sails seemed tense with desire for adventure. In those wandering



castles came men of every nation, together with strange wares from oversea.

And what of the jostling pilgrims, who, bound for Walsingham, Canterbury, or foreign shrines, continually crossed the city ; what of the soldiers, those armoured hosts, marching to blatant music on their way to the wars ?

Surely legs were made for better use than to be thrust under a desk !

But when he was full eighteen years old, the lad's stalwart frame and falcon eyes prompted his master to ship him on a vessel bound for northern seas. Henceforth, during many a season, Jocelyn sailed those cold waters ; not without danger from pirates, and from the fleets of the Hansa merchants, who treacherously attacked all rival craft. Thrice he headed the boarding party ; on two occasions, by a master shot, he disabled the enemy's captain. Truly, he had his fill of adventure, but the life was hard, and so unprofitable to all except the grasping owners of the ships, that, by the time he was five-and-twenty, Jocelyn had saved no more than a dozen gold pieces.

One wild autumn evening he was walking on the beach near Wisby Town, in Gothland, when some men, bearing a dead body, went down to the water, and prepared to carry their burden along a ledge of rock that ran out into the sea. Approaching them, Jocelyn saw that the corpse was that of a middle-aged man, brine-sodden to a ghostly greyness, and cruelly handled by the waves. In the language of the country he asked them what they purposed to do.

They looked at him savagely ; but observing Jocelyn's huge frame, and the stern set of his mouth, their leader replied—

“ I see no reason why we should answer meddlesome strangers ; nevertheless, as we are not engaged on unlawful business, know that this fellow came here upon the tide, and will go out with the ebb, which is

now setting strongly seawards. Such few coins as we found in his belt are not sufficient to repay us for the trouble of burying him."

Pity for the dead moved Jocelyn to say, "If I give you ten silver pieces, will you carry him to the nearest church?"

"By St. Olaf," was the answer, "if any fool cares to purchase carrion at such a price, we are ready to oblige him. Where is the money?"

"Not so fast," said Jocelyn. "Here is half—a handsel; the rest you shall have when he lies at the church door."

"Done!" replied the ruffian, pocketing the silver. "Lads, put about for Peter's Chapel!"

When the men had left him in the porch with the dead, the Englishman summoned a priest, and begged him to give the corpse Christian burial.

"Willingly," was the answer, "if so be he died in the faith!"

They examined the body, and found a small wooden cross hanging round the neck by a lanyard.

"My mind is now easy," said the priest. "Tomorrow he shall be buried with all due rites. You have performed a charitable action."

"Father," answered Jocelyn, "half a charity is no charity. Here are five gold coins, with which to inter him decently, and also for masses on his behalf. My ship sails at daybreak; I leave these things in your charge."

"Rely on me," answered the old man, "and may Heaven reward you. But, before you go, help me to lay him in the nave for the night."

At dawn Jocelyn's vessel beat out before a strong north-easter, and, as the sun lighted the bleak seas of Gothland, it pleased him to think the dead sailor was not to lie in those chill waters, a prey to the creatures of the deep.



On his return to London, Jocelyn found with joy that he was transferred to the Mediterranean trade. For several years he sailed that brilliant sea, visiting havens full of warmth and colour, in which he met many men, to whom the East and its wonders were familiar. He dealt with heathens, such bitter enemies of the Christian that trade alone kept their daggers in the sheath. Again and again, he fought Arab sea-rovers, capture by whom was worse than death; a knowledge that strengthened Jocelyn's sword arm, till his golden beard was spoken of as a devouring flame in every pagan harbour about the great inland waters. Many an unbeliever he put to ransom, and, in this way, slowly scraped together a thousand golden bezants.

When Jocelyn was some thirty years old, a truce was signed between Christian and Infidel, so that it became safe for a baptized man to land in the ports of the heathen. Jocelyn's ship put into Jaffa, and, having discharged its cargo, took aboard a party of English pilgrims, homeward bound.

On the day appointed for their departure, Jocelyn was crossing a waste piece of ground near the harbour. At one end rose a stone platform, on which, bound to stakes, hung the corpses of criminals. A party of men approached the dismal spot, leading among them a girl whose like Jocelyn had never yet seen, for her skin was of a pale, clear amber; her hair lustrous black; her face well featured, save that the eyes were strangely long, and slanted upwards. But of these things Jocelyn took little notice, so filled was he with compassion by the agony of the girl's look, as the ruffians hoisted her on the platform, bound her to a post with brutal violence, and prepared to slip a noose about her neck.

Leaping up by the victim, Jocelyn laid hands on the rope, and inquired what the prisoner's crime might be; also if there was any hope of pardon.

One of the Saracens eyed the Englishman cunningly, then replied—

“ Listen, unbeliever ! Since you have taken a fancy to the wench, I will tell you this. She is the property of a wealthy widow, and has been condemned to death by her mistress for breaking a rare crystal vase. Let us bargain. Pay five hundred gold bezants, the value of the jar ; four hundred more, the price of the maid ; add one hundred for our trouble in arranging the business, and she is yours.”

Without hesitation Jocelyn ordered them to lead the slave aboard. That done, he handed one thousand gold bezants to the Saracens, and placed the girl in charge of some of the female pilgrims.

That evening the ship sailed. On the voyage Jocelyn saw little of his purchase, and discovered still less with regard to her history, for she knew no Christian tongue. Such Arabic as she had was broken, but the gratitude in her eyes needed no interpreter.

As soon as the vessel reached England, Jocelyn entrusted the girl to his godfather, an Aldgate mercer, in whose family he left her, together with money for her keep, while he himself returned to the Levant.

A year after, when he once more landed in London port, his employer told him to prepare for a much longer and more dangerous journey. He was to sail for Damietta, whence he must travel overland to a port on the Red Sea. Here, through the agency of some Jews, an Arab ship bound for Cathay would be awaiting him. Venetian merchants had, according to report, ventured profitably in that far country ; therefore, it seemed certain that Englishmen also could do so.

Jocelyn visited his godfather, and told the family of this journey. The foreign girl listened attentively. She was by now able to speak halting English, and understood the language better than she could use it. When





He handed one thousand gold bezants to the Saracens.

Jocelyn had finished, she rose and, bowing low before him, said—

“ My dear master, who, as I have learnt with deep sorrow, ruined himself to save this unworthy person from a dreadful death, I pray you, hear me. My obscure name is Li, and I am the youngest daughter of the Emperor of Cathay. Five years ago, wandering with some attendants in the garden of my father's southern palace, which stands near a great river, I was, together with three slaves, captured by pirates. These ruffians sold us to some sea-robbers from Arabia, who, setting high value on us, because so few of my people visit western lands, sailed with us to Egypt. My servants died on the voyage, and I envied their fate, for I was sold to a cruel mistress. The rest you know. But for your charity, I should have died a painful death. Some months ago the spirit of one of my ancestors appeared to me in a dream, telling me to make you a robe of the pattern worn by the princes of my native country. The materials for it, after a long and difficult search, I contrived to purchase with some pearls I had hidden about me ; all that were left out of the many I was wearing when the pirates captured us.”

She went out, and returned bearing a garment of yellow silk, on which were blue and green dragons, exquisitely embroidered.

“ Take this,” said Li, “ and be sure to wear it when you appear before my father. If he inquires how you obtained it, tell him all. Such a story will certainly secure his favour.”

Jocelyn, touched by the girl's gratitude, thanked her, and promised to obey. On the morrow he began his long journey ; and, some two years later, having met with many perilous adventures, reached a great haven in South Cathay.

Here everything was strange. The city, immense beyond belief, extended along a wide river, littered



with thousands of boats. On these lived whole families, who seldom set foot ashore. In the city were gorgeous temples filled with images, some beautiful, others horrible or grotesque. Towers of porcelain, many stories high, glittered above the roofs; the narrow streets were inhabited by workmen of extraordinary skill in every craft. All these people were yellow skinned and black haired, with narrow, slanting eyes, so that, in the young women, Jocelyn was startled to find uncomely doubles of Li.

By extreme good fortune, the emperor happened to be visiting the town, and Jocelyn was told that, if he made application in the prescribed manner, he would be admitted to an audience, for, though heathens, this nation was most courteous and hospitable to strangers.

So one morning, wearing the yellow robe, on which he observed every glance turned with astonishment, Jocelyn entered the palace, and, passing through many splendid apartments, was shown into a hall panelled with vermilion lacquer. At the farther end was a platform; on this, within a wide recess screened by pillars, sat a stately man, wearing garments of embroidered silk, and surrounded by officials magnificently clothed in the same rare fabrics.

Having done obeisance, as directed by an interpreter who spoke the Arabian language, Jocelyn petitioned for leave to trade.

The emperor seemed so greatly disturbed that, for a while, he could not speak. At last, in a trembling voice, he inquired through the interpreter how the stranger had come by the yellow robe.

Remembering Li's words, Jocelyn told the full story.

When he had finished, the emperor, visibly overcome, spoke to the interpreter, who thus translated the Imperial words:

“Wanderer from the West! Receive the assurance of my especial favour and protection, for, in this

matter, the design of beneficent spirits is plainly manifest. The Lady Li is no other than my youngest daughter, whom, for years, I have lamented as dead, thinking she must have perished miserably. Know that the robe you wear is reserved for Imperial use only. No child of mine would have bestowed it on an unworthy individual. Your generous conduct deserves, and shall receive, a suitable token of my gratitude. Now, hear my commands. Return at once to your native city, and bring back the princess, sparing no expense to ensure a safe and swift journey. To this end, I assign you ten times one hundred thousand silver pieces. In addition you shall receive one hundred thousand for your employers, together with the like sum as a gift for yourself. Five of my councillors shall accompany you, and also five slave girls, to attend on the princess. Further, if by accident or design the Lady Li should return in other company than yours, I hereby promise her hand and the governorship of a district to the man who brings her back; whether appointed by you as a substitute, or sufficiently bold and skilful in himself to undertake the hazardous journey. Depart as soon as possible. From this day twelvemonth, till my daughter arrives, a sentry shall keep continual watch on the signal tower at the river mouth, to announce the approach of her ship, which shall fly a dragon banner of yellow silk, provided for this purpose. I have spoken!"

On the morrow Jocelyn sailed. He had a favourable voyage, landed in Egypt within a year, and one month later knocked at his godfather's door, followed by a crowd that the sight of his yellow-skinned attendants had collected.

The Lady Li lost no time in preparation, and soon all were aboard a powerful ship, escorted by two heavily armed vessels.

They reached Egypt safely, and travelled overland to the Red Sea harbour, where three fast, well-found



Arab craft awaited them. Before a favourable wind they ran down the narrow waters, sped through the Gate of Tears, and thence eastwards across the great southern ocean.

During these months, Jocelyn had been much in Li's company. Her gratitude, affection, and the thought that so exalted a princess could stoop to love a rough sea-trader, touched him deeply. He contrasted that gentleness and submission with the insolent, masterful airs of too many of the pampered daughters found in western homes. Before Arabia had faded on the sky-line, the thought of marriage with this girl seemed to him a desirable thing ; the more so as, during her stay in London, Li had become a Christian.

By now they were sweltering under a sun so merciless that, even below the awnings, the sea air was hot as a furnace breath. But that heat was less fiery than the hatred in the heart of one man on board.

This was a Bristol factor, one of Jocelyn's comrades, who had obtained leave to join the expedition. He knew of the emperor's promise : brooding in the great sea silence, he conceived a foul plan, and waited his opportunity.

The weather broke ; gales swept the salt wilderness, over which the lean Arab ships now scudded awash, urged by close-reefed lateens. On the third night of the storm Jocelyn came on deck with the factor to watch the lightning.

Two steersmen were on the poop, lashed at their posts ; forwards, a couple of hands, together with the master, clung to the running tackle of the fore lateen. So thick was the gloom between the flashes, that no one saw a huge wave dash Jocelyn, half stunned, against the bulwarks in the waist, nor observed the factor, as the ship staggered clear, seize his companion and hoist him overboard.

Next morning the gale died down to a breeze, and

remained so till the end of the voyage. This was now mournful, for the Lady Li kept to her cabin, lamenting over Jocelyn, who had utterly disappeared since the last wild night.

Amid great rejoicings and the boom of many gongs, they entered harbour, with a glory of yellow silk flaming at the mizzen lateen peak of the largest ship. The emperor welcomed his daughter, and, in company, they grieved over Jocelyn's fate. So broken-hearted was Li, that she vowed to spend the rest of her life in solitude.

But now the factor came forward ; and, after declaring that Jocelyn had appointed him as his substitute in the event of death, claimed fulfilment of the Imperial promise.

The sovereign was greatly troubled, yet he could not go back on his word. Therefore, when Li refused to submit, her father sorrowfully announced he must compel her to do so. All she could obtain was that the marriage should be delayed for six full moons.

Jocelyn, though half stunned, had been aware of the factor's treachery. The chilliness of the sea revived him ; he was a powerful swimmer and rode easily on the rushing seas. He knew that his enemy would make no attempt to rescue him ; and therefore, remembering that, in the glare of the flashes, land had appeared far away towards the north, struck out in that direction. As he swam, terrified of the fierce, man-eating fish by which those waters are infested, it seemed to him that some current was bearing him swiftly where he wished to go.

To his great amazement, not long after, he touched bottom, and waded out of the surf on to shelving sands. Here he walked up and down above the tide-mark, till dawn showed him he had been cast upon a small island. It was barren, save for a few palm trees, on the fruit of which, and on shellfish, Jocelyn stayed



his hunger. In this way he lived for a while, seeking some means of escape, half maddened by the thought that he had lost Li, and was doomed to spend many years, if not his whole life, on the island; or, worse still, fall a victim to wandering Arab shipmen. Though no other land was in sight, he knew that some must lie northwards, and was tempted to escape thither on a raft made of palm tree logs. Unfortunately he had no tools except a knife.

One day, while he sat on the shore, he was startled to see a human figure approaching across the hot, white sands. It was a man, lank and tall, by his features plainly no Oriental, and pale as a bleached shell. He hailed Jocelyn in Arabic, asking him how he had come to the island.

Having heard the story, the stranger said—

“I am one of the Freemen of the Sea. My business is with those who go down to it in ships, and I travel both on or under the water at will. If you choose, I can convey you to Cathay with such speed that we shall make the harbour but one day after the princess’s ship, which is, even now, so near it that to-morrow morning the signal gong will sound. In return, you must promise to give me your first-born child, when it is a twelvemonth old.”

Jocelyn, looking at that unearthly, pale face, refused; but the man pressed him, pointing out that escape was otherwise impossible, and that Li would become the factor’s wife. This decided his hearer to accept the grim proposal.

At once, the Freeman of the Sea swept his arm in a circle, level with the horizon. Soon after, a ship appeared, rounding the island. It was such a craft as Jocelyn had never yet beheld. The hull was lean, bone white, and burred with sea-growths, like a vessel that, having lain many a year deep in the salt depths, is heaved up by earthquake to wither under the light of the sun. The sails were square, ash grey, wind worn;

and, in place of a figure-head, a shark's skull gleamed at the bows.

This strange craft put in close to land, then lowered a boat, which conveyed Jocelyn and his companion aboard. On the vessel were many shipmen, some mere lads, others old; but, stalwart or feeble, all were grey as images of stone, with sunken, lustreless eyes.

The Freeman of the Sea led Jocelyn down to a cabin, and pointing to a threadbare couch, said, "Lie there and rest. On no account may you come on deck till I summon you!"

As the man spoke, so great a drowsiness fell on his hearer that he stretched himself on the bed, and at once sank into dreamless depths of sleep.

He was awakened by a touch on the shoulder, and followed the grey man on deck. Their ship was riding within a bowshot of a fertile land, which the carved roofs of the temples and the many storied towers plainly showed to be Cathay.

"We have arrived," said the Freeman of the Sea. "I am familiar with this coast, and will lead you to the city you desire. It is ten leagues distant, so let us lose no time, but row ashore forthwith. The boat is waiting."

They landed in a shallow creek, and, travelling northwards all day, before sunset reached the great haven. There they entered an inn, and the Freeman of the Sea spoke to its landlord in the language of that country; after which he said to Jocelyn—

"It is as I said. The Arab ships are in port, and your lady is greatly distressed, partly because she believes you to be dead, and also because the factor has held her father to his promise. The Imperial word cannot be broken, but fear nothing. This same night my ship will remove the traitor. What is your pleasure regarding him?"

"God has been gracious to me," said the Englishman, "in that I shall be able to deliver the princess.



With your consent, I wish him to be left on the island where you found me."

"A merciful decision, which shall be carried out," answered the other. "I must now take my leave. Your entertainment, together with a night's lodging, has been paid for. To-morrow, walk freely out of this inn, and present yourself at the palace. Farewell!"

Before Jocelyn could reply, the grey man had vanished, remarking that they would meet again, a twelve-month after the child's birth.

Next day, Jocelyn, travel-stained but confident, entered the palace and asked for an audience. Some of the officials recognized him, and, hoping to obtain the Lady Li's favour, hastened to spread the news.

The emperor received the Englishman joyfully, but at the same time with sorrow, because, by the terms of her father's promise, Li must become the factor's wife.

"Dismiss that care," said Jocelyn; "an evil conscience has driven my enemy to flee."

Thereupon, he revealed the fellow's villainy. Instant orders were given to arrest the rogue, but he had disappeared; no man knew how.

So, with great pomp, the marriage was celebrated after the fashion of Cathay, and later according to Christian rites by a priest who was a slave in that country. This done, husband and wife set out for the city of which Jocelyn had been appointed governor.

He ruled justly, beloved by the people, and feared by corrupt officials.

Some time after, a son was born to him. Jocelyn had not told Li of his bargain with the Freeman of the Sea, and could not bring himself to reveal the matter now. Ever since his marriage the business had been a shadow between them, perplexing and saddening the princess.

Day followed day; weeks lengthened into months; the child was already finding his feet, and the sight of

the little creature drove the father to a despair that filled the house with gloom.

At last, when the boy was a full twelvemonth old, Jocelyn was seated one evening in a summer-house on the banks of the broad stream that flowed through their town. With him was his son, playing on the marble floor of the pavilion. The nurse had gone to fetch some toys for her little charge, whose ivory face recalled to Jocelyn his wife's quaint and delicate features.

A shadow filled the doorway. It was the Freeman of the Sea, towering against the western gold.

"I have come to claim my rights," he said, advancing towards the boy.

Jocelyn stepped between them. With tears, he offered riches, honours, anything except the child.

"I have no use for foolish gear," answered the Freeman of the Sea. "Such bargaining should have been done before you accepted my offer. Your father-in-law, a heathen, was more honourable than you, because he would have kept his word. Yield me the child."

Jocelyn still pleaded.

"Come," said the grey man, "I will abate this much. The boy shall decide for himself."

He stretched out his hand, which the little creature seized with a smile.

"If it must be so," cried Jocelyn, "take my son, and God protect him!"

The Freeman of the Sea eyed the father fixedly. "Look again!" he said. "Have you forgotten one whom you laid on the flagstones by the light of the sanctuary lamp?"

Then, while yet a dim memory was gathering shape in Jocelyn's mind, the other continued—

"I am that man your charity, long years ago, saved from an unconsecrated grave. Biding my time, I have given you life, happiness, and fortune. Take back your



son, as a token that gratitude survives among the dead."

He laid the boy in Jocelyn's arms, then added—

"One thing more. Within a year the emperor will die, about the time of the rice harvest. In the confusion caused by that death, you and yours will be in danger. Therefore, immediately after the burial, you must flee. Have all in readiness. The ship that brought you here will lie off the signal tower to convey you home."

As he so spoke he faded into the evening dimness.

That same night Jocelyn told his wife all. Together they gave thanks and wondered. Following the counsel of the dead, they prepared for flight, and at the time appointed were received on the strange ship. It weighed anchor forthwith, and, before darkness set in, the splendour of Cathay had sunk below the northern sky-line. As they slept, they were dimly aware that the vessel was moving with unearthly swiftness; and, when they woke under a brilliant sun, it was to find themselves lying on the beach, near Cadiz harbour in Spain.

An English craft conveyed them to London. Weary of travel, Jocelyn established himself not far from Upnor, in a noble house, whose grounds stretched down to the Medway. By the water side stood an outlandish pavilion. There, as prying neighbours observed, Dame Aylward was wont to spend many hours; at which times her dark, slanting eyes were often adream and wistful; more especially on clear mornings, when the sun strode flaming out of the East.

## COMMENTARY

ANY one who has read this little collection of folklore stories will notice certain points of similarity that here and there recall other tales of the same description. Thus the African animal legend reminds us of the fable of the Hare and the Tortoise ; the Roumanian story of Vasilia the Vain brings to our mind Inge, the girl who trod upon bread. A comparative study of such traditions proves that, all the world over, tales of this type possess common features, and the purpose of this Commentary is to discuss the rise and spread of such stories.

The present generation differs from all its predecessors in its apparent indifference to past history and customs. This feeling seems to be due to the multiplicity of attractions offered by current life—wireless, moving pictures, motors, and a general wealth of interest.

It is good for people in these days to recollect that, apart from a knowledge of man's history, a great deal of the current life of our own days is meaningless. When we listen over the wireless, for example, much that we hear is explained by legendary lore. Many of the operas are based upon Folk Tales, and these enter into the theme of the music, and serve as a guide in the interpretation of motif. Songs we hear sung, books we read, pictures we see, and even the ephemeral advertisement in street or on railway station, refer to



traditions of the past, and are fully intelligible only to those persons who understand their allusions.

Earlier generations had less to amuse them, and had, therefore, greater leisure to reflect upon life, so that in the past ordinary man has speculated more upon his ancestry, and has fervently discussed the circumstances in which his fathers existed.

However, there are still many people who feel an inclination to explore old beliefs, and they can always find abundant material as well as assistance in their task, because the searcher can guide his study by the work of great men, who, in days gone by, have made an earnest endeavour to discover the mystery of life. Moreover, he will also find that the more he explores the keener grows his desire to pursue his task, and this in itself is the greatest possible help. Fascination gathers round any painstaking effort to reconstruct the lives of previous generations.

Folklore is the science that seeks to explain the meaning of peasant and local customs surviving in modern life. In bygone days men made much of history, and cast but a sceptical glance at folklore. However, the modern unbeliever, in his turn, is not always willing to accept without reservation even the teachings of history. He knows full well what kind of people they were who compiled Chronicles in the Middle Ages ; he realizes how a bias may completely veil the truth ; and he often discovers that facts unquestioned by his fathers are regarded by his own generation as no more than suckers from the root, mere unproductive growth. Such a person, seeing how often and how easily history may err, and appreciating how people of his own day live in great ignorance as to what is occurring in the development of our own race, either because they do not care to know, or because their rulers do not choose to let them know the facts, prefers to trust to custom and tradition, and finds in folklore a guileless presentment of generations long since

dead. The words we speak, the habits of our race, our religion, our natural life, are the legacy of the splendid past—that past we are so inclined to ignore.

English is a member of a group of languages described as the Aryan family. The language spoken by us is the offshoot of a parent tongue, just as Hindu, Persian, Celtic, Romanic, Hellenic, Slavonic, are offshoots of that same stock ; for example, Welsh, Greek, Russian, English, and Swedish, to name but some of the great family, are all akin etymologically. If these Aryan peoples speak in languages proved to be of common parenthood, is it not natural to suppose that in other respects they possess common traits ?

This is too wide a subject to dilate upon ; but one thing at least we may say regarding folklore. The “Aryan hypothesis” that attempts to explain the existence of similar stories among Aryan peoples of Europe and Asia, has been so clearly proved that it stands secure. All over Europe, for instance, as well as in the East, people find a story depending for its plot upon the revelation of the name of an evil being ; in England the story is called Tom Tit Tot ; in Germany it is known as Rumpelstiltskin. About sixty years ago a man named Von Hahn believed that he could classify all the folklore stories of the world under three great groups, each group containing some forty sub-divisions. His scheme was found to be unsatisfactory ; but, working upon the idea, the late Mr. Baring-Gould drew up a list of about seventy different types of stories—as, for example, those resembling the tale of Cupid and Psyche ; The Old Woman and her Pig ; The Pied Piper ; Jack and the Beanstalk ; The Seven Swans ; Punchkin, or the giant who had a heart hidden away in some external place ; Samson and Delilah ; and stories about the devil being outwitted.

Mr. Andrew Lang in one of his works spoke about the “far-travelled tale,” and said that the Aryan



hypothesis failed to explain the existence of the same story in Japan, Zululand, Madagascar, Samoa, and among Greeks, Finns, and North American Indians. He asserted that legends of this kind are "the natural property of mothers and grandmothers." His idea was that the alien wife, captive among a tribe, has in the past brought to the hearthside not only a strange speech but also the tradition of her childhood. If we extend the remark to the stories carried through long centuries by travellers and mariners, slaves, pirates, nomads, Jews, Crusaders, missionaries, and Gipsies, it becomes possible to trace the rudiments of the literature of the world. But folklore does more than assist us to trace fiction and suggest an explanation of its origin. It discovers in nursery rhymes, local sayings, ballads, old saws and songs, customs and beliefs, the meaning of the past, explaining how people lived, and by what ties they were united. The song, "London Bridge is broken down," is based upon a definite event in history, and is confirmed by chronicles. In Hawick, the song that is sung yearly, "Teribus and Teri Odin," is a corrupted form of the cry of the pagan Saxons: "Tyr habbe us; ye Tyr, ye Odin." Carlyle narrates how the bargemen on the Trent cry: "Have a care, there is the Eager coming." The old time Nottingham bargemen believed in a god Ægir; their modern representatives call the swelling of the river by that ancient name. Remember how our word "luck" commemorates the crafty Loki. The saying, "Tappie, tappie tousie, will ye be my man?" takes the mind back to the days of feudal overlordship. Rags hung on bushes are a curious and mild survival of rites attended by human sacrifice. In Egypt, a doll cast into the Nile at a certain season of the year suggests the same thing. "Here we go round the mulberry bush" is a song reminiscent of some old religious celebration; "Green gravel, green gravel, the grass is so green," is, so we are told, the

relic of an old funeral chant. Mr. Edward Clodd asserted that " Buck, Buck, how many fingers do I hold up ? " was played in the streets of Rome, and " Hot Cockles " is depicted in Egyptian wall paintings. The legend of Lady Godiva at Coventry is duplicated at Southam, and again at St. Briavels ; while Pliny alludes to British celebrations in which a woman rode painted and naked. Thus, like the stories of William Tell and the faithful Gellert, the legend of Lady Godiva ought to be ruled out of history and take its proper place as a contribution of folklore.

We do not know how or when the groups of Aryan peoples scattered and made their way to the several lands now occupied by their descendants, but throughout their wanderings they retained common elements in the language and mythology they had shared before their dispersal. Sanskrit, now a dead language, but once spoken in India, is regarded as the oldest member of the Aryan family, and it is by the study of that tongue that philologists as well as students of folklore have found traces that link in a common ancestry many Indian peoples with those of Europe. Climate and geographical features have, in the course of centuries, modified both stock and tradition ; and this must be remembered when we consider folklore. People have insisted that a similarity of traditions in two countries indicates intercourse between the inhabitants of those lands. An instance is given of fables originally Indian having been taken to Greece, translated from Greek into Arabic, in which language they have travelled to India, their native country. Thus we see distinctly one type of legend common to all Aryan peoples and the nations that have had dealings with them—namely, the tale of a hero who struggled victoriously with a cruel foe, and by his valour released either treasure or human beings. India supplies tales of Indra fighting the Dragon Vritra ; Persia, of Rustum warring against a great



white ass ; Rome, of Hercules and his fight with Cacus ; Greece, of Apollo wrestling with the Python. Norse mythology tells us of Thor in Midgard, and of Sigurd attacking Fafnir ; Hebrew legend relates a conflict between God and Satan ; Christian lore admits the tradition of St. George and the Dragon.

Mr. Clodd, commenting on this common feature, remarked that India and Scandinavia could not have borrowed from each other, or still less have created independently similar myths ; yet accounts of a giant ape, a huge turtle, and an elephant appear in the mythologies of each land with just those characteristic changes which can be accounted for by geographical situation.

Who can say how this idea of a struggle arose ? It may have come from the alternation of light and darkness, or summer and winter. Nature's changes meant so much to primitive people. The course of day from dawn to dusk, the passage of the seasons throughout the year, had a deep significance. Cold and darkness were things of terror and evil, little modified by man's feeble first attempts to warm his body and light his dwelling. The point for us to notice is that similar ideas regarding natural phenomena gave rise to many of the tales we find all over the world, so that the Hindu mother amused her children with stories akin to those told by parents in the north of Europe ; and we become aware that the links between these can be forged only when man is able to read the past of his race sufficiently to account for the migrations of the peoples of the world.

Meanwhile, we must recollect with what skill the early Church planted a new faith in pagan soil, and grafted her festivals on ancient ceremonies wherever she found them. Easter, in name and origin a pagan celebration, was associated with the death and resurrection of Christ. A similar transference is seen in the two festivals of St. George and the Assumption of the

Virgin. What was done with feasts was, perhaps, attempted with folklore ; but stories handed down from parent to child, and told in the quiet of the home, could not be attacked in the same way. It is very difficult to kill a legend, whether heathen or Christian ; and relics that have outlived the subtlety of ecclesiasticism, such as, for example, the observance of May Day, a celebration of Nature's returning life and a survival of tree worship, must have been deeply ingrained in the hearts of the pre-Christian peoples.

As we have remarked, folklore, in examining those facts which history has despised, proceeds in the same way as modern chemists, who take what was formerly regarded as so much refuse, examine, analyse, and, in so doing, frequently discover latent wealth. The science of folklore gives weight to obsolete customs and observances, religious practices thrust ruthlessly aside by a newer faith. It brings to light memories that would be forgotten save for quaint reference in nursery rhyme or children's game. We must not claim for folklore that it is an exact or comprehensive science, for it is forced to deal with fragmentary evidence, and works not so much with chronicle and document as with obscure survivals. Whereas history investigates written or sculptured records, folklore is concerned with spoken words, village traditions, or the songs of childhood. By comparing these with the facts of history and a study of people, it finds, to take one example, that the branch of a tree laid, some May Day morning, upon the doorstep of a house in a village like Newport in Essex is a reference not only to the observance of May Day but also to the deeper significance of tree worship common among all Aryan races. In ancient Italy the oak was sacred to Jupiter ; among the Celts the image of Zeus was a tall oak ; in our own islands the very name Druid illustrates the same belief ; and in the Far East human beings were married to trees.



No doubt you recollect the old Norse story of Balder and the Mistletoe. The veneration for this plant was alive in the days of the Druids, who at stated times and with solemn observance cut it from the oak by means of a golden sickle. The same reverence is shown to-day by the Ainus of Japan, the Italians, the Swiss, and the Swedes, who each in their own manner regard the mistletoe as possessing peculiar influence. It has been suggested that Balder was probably the personification of a mistletoe-bearing oak.\* Aubrey tells us that to cut oak wood is unfortunate, and that, when an oak is falling, it gives a kind of shriek or groan, as if the spirit of the tree were lamenting. And to this day, among civilized people, it is only the jerry-builder or a soulless district council that regards with callous indifference the fall of an old and stately tree.

Folklore based upon traditions and man's earlier life upon this earth largely consists of quaint stories and narratives ; for man in all ages and in every land loves a yarn. But in the field it offers for research the student also finds traces of the following : Beliefs as to another life ; ideas and theories regarding animals ; leechcraft ; witchcraft ; magic and divination ; superstition as to plants and trees ; credence given by old-time people to accounts of the existence of goblins and fairies ; traces of old festivals, customs, and ceremonies ; relics of games and local celebrations ; legends, proverbs, place-rhymes, and superstition in general. Add to these, myths, ballads, songs, herotales, legends of trolls, stories of the Creation, the deluge of fire and doom, and we obtain some idea of the wide extent of material open for examination. The less cultured and civilized the race, the more such beliefs and stories are firmly believed in by its people. As man advances in the practical arts, and abandons

\* Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*.

a natural for an artificial existence, with night turned into day, and the rough and dangerous places of the world made into smooth motor tracks, he seems to become vastly superior, and grows out of childish superstition. It may be that the human race hereafter will lose all interest in these ancient things ; or, on the other hand, as knowledge grows wider, man may come to regard the past more reverently, and, finding in its experience a wisdom deeper than his own, be willing to learn its lessons.

Certain it is that, as man has progressed, he has clung tenaciously to old beliefs and old customs, and shown a desire not only to explain the world of nature around him, but also to see in it more than meets the physical eye. The mystic is the true seer and poet. From that spirit have originated myths, legends, and religions. Some of these have been rendered acceptable ; others have been flung aside as ridiculous, yet the open-minded person is always ready to learn the truth. The mediæval church and the practice of Roman law have cut down ruthlessly many of the beliefs man used to cherish and nurture. Perhaps from the roots a newer growth will spring up, and man may even yet learn that modern superiority is not always right in its assumptions, and that the old things of the earth were nearer to reality than some of the most elaborate creeds issued by zealots in council.

In conclusion, it is possible that the reader may not only notice but also take an interest in tracing general resemblances or particular relations to other stories of the same type. In Spanish folklore, for instance, the story of the seven swans appears as a story of seven lions, and at once the influence of the Moors upon Spanish life becomes apparent. In Welsh tradition accounts are given of the Tylwith Têg (Fair Family) who live beneath the earth in a calm, bright region free from strife and noise, and this is probably a remnant of history dealing with the disappearance



of the people of the Stone Age before the coming of the wielders of iron weapons. In the Tyrol we come across legends of a similar subterranean world lit with mystic light, calm and beautiful, and remote from the machination of a malevolent spirit dwelling in the earth mountains. The reader will note the belief of the Maoris in fairies, creatures smaller than men, fair of skin and hair, haunters of the night-watches, ingenious, joyful and musical. Or he may find pleasure in realizing that not only in Christian lands, but also in what we are prone to call pagan countries, people love stories in which the devil is outwitted. In fact, the idea of "a gullible devil" is universal, from Tom Tit in England to far-away Japan.

One widespread legend tells us of a giant who had no heart in his body, but guarded it in a carefully concealed place, a tale probably issuing from a belief that the spiritual part of man might temporarily, or eternally, live apart from the body. This giant would choose some such place as a bird's egg, and cunningly hide the spot. With the Hindus, this idea is found in the story of Punchkin, and a queen's young son discovers that Punchkin's soul is inhabiting the body of a small green parrot shut up in a cage. As long as things went well with the heart, or soul, they prospered with the giant. We see a variation of this idea in the story of Aladdin's Lamp. The same plot occurs in one of the tales of our little collection. Again, there are stories that all the world over speak of human things afflicted by external powers, who for some occult reason turn their victims wholly or partially into animals, while, in other legends, animals become human beings; so that, perchance, a being exists as a man by night and an animal by day. The story of Beauty and the Beast may be regarded as a type of such tales.

Another of our tales embodies the belief in the gratitude shown by the dead for acts of charity, a

notion widely spread throughout folklore, especially in northern lands. The legend of the tortoise exemplifies the attempt of primitive people to explain physical peculiarities of animals, and a desire to bridge the gulf between human and animal intelligence. The opening of the Maori story illustrates the same tendency among Polynesian peoples. Belief in magic is found in many of the tales in this collection. The reader will, however, notice one point of difference in the Maori account of fairies. Many races have traditions that suggest that it is unwise to have dealings with such beings. Their gifts turn to dross, and their span of life differs from that of men. Remember Rip Van Winkle. This attitude may be an unwitting reflection on the vanity of human hopes and desires. The Maori Kahukura, however, obtained benefit from the fairies, and mingled with them on equal and safe terms.

With these few remarks we leave this little work in the reader's hands, asking him to remember that here are only a few types of the many stories that represent the imaginings of man in the misty past.



## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### *Slender Pine and the Hunters* (page 7)

1. What do you learn from this story of—

(a) The Indian's belief in the supernatural ?

(b) The power of superstition over the mind of man ?

2. Can you suggest any other ending for this story ? Which do you think is the more prevalent in folklore stories, the " sad ending " story or the " happy ending " story ?

3. Contrast the life of a North American Indian hunter with that of a fisherman in a tropical land. Do you think that geographical circumstances would affect the beliefs of either ?

### *The Great Stones of Lormariaquer* (page 28)

4. What are Menhirs ? Search for any information you can find as to their origin and ancient use. Whereabouts are Menhirs found ?

5. Can you suggest any special reasons for the prevalence of superstition in Brittany ?

6. Wherein lies the special horror of this story ? Can you think of any other circumstances that would either heighten or lessen the tension at the critical moment ?

*The Magic Stone* (page 42)

7. What peculiarly Chinese characteristics does this tale present?

8. Which of the marvels seen by Weng inside the Magic Stone do you consider the most interesting? State the reasons for your preference.

9. Discuss the condition of mediæval China as revealed in this story.

*Vasilia the Vain* (page 59)

10. Do you consider that Vasilia's conduct was deserving of such a punishment as that which befell her?

11. Does this story and its details suggest an early or a late origin? To what period of history would you (roughly) assign it?

12. Was Michael entirely wise in postponing his interference to the last minute? Debate as to the consequences if he had relented earlier.

*The Troll's Revenge* (page 75)

13. Is there any fairy mounds in the British Islands? Tell all you know about this matter.

14. For what reason did the Troll select Silly Peter as a messenger instead of employing a person of ordinary intelligence?

15. Briefly relate any other legend you know in which ghosts are said to haunt the ruins of buildings sunk under water.



*The Weaving of Nets* (page 90)

16. In what respects does the Maori conception of fairies (a) resemble, (b) differ from, that found in English folk tales? Can you think of any reasons to explain the rise of the idea of fairies?

17. Do you know of any other mythology that treats fish as wondrous creatures?

18. What do you gather from this story as to—

- (a) The religion of the Maoris?
- (b) The position of chief among this people?
- (c) The relation of man and woman in the Maori race?

*Feodor's Bride* (page 106)

19. Can you think of any other stories in which there is a kingdom or palace underneath a sea or lake? Is it usual for people to come safely through adventures in these underwater palaces, or do they usually come to an unhappy end?

20. What do you gather of Russian peasants and peasant life and dress from the story?

21. Suppose yourself to be one of the village lads. Tell in your own words the tale of having seen Feodor and his bride come to Marko's hut, and of the dowry they brought with them.

*Why Water Tortoises are larger than Land  
Tortoises* (page 125)

22. Why is it that in European animal legends the lion is represented as the king of beasts, but is not so described in the folklore of other continents?

23. Give a short account of any other story in which an animal makes use of a device similar to that employed by Udo against the hippopotamus.

24. What peculiar belief as to the relations between men and beasts is exemplified in this tale ?

*The Horse-Headed Prince* (page 136)

25. Why was it necessary for Anna's shoes to be made of iron ? What information from other stories you have read bears upon this matter ?

26. Can you offer any ideas as to what is meant by the statement that malignant powers had controlled Pedro's early life ? Does folklore throw any light on this affair ?

27. In what respects does this story resemble any others that you may have read ?

*The Mouse-Deer's Punishment* (page 155)

28. Suppose this story to be transplanted to a colder climate. What animals would you then expect to take part ? Could they behave in a similar manner to the mouse-deer, the heron, and the tiger ?

29. Can you account for the presence in folklore of stories in which birds, fish, or animals play the most important parts ? Make a list of such stories as you can find. What do you learn from them ?

30. Do the creatures in animal stories betray a malignancy as great as is shown in some of the stories in which human beings take part ? Is there any reason for their doing so, or not doing so ?



*The Merchant* (page 170)

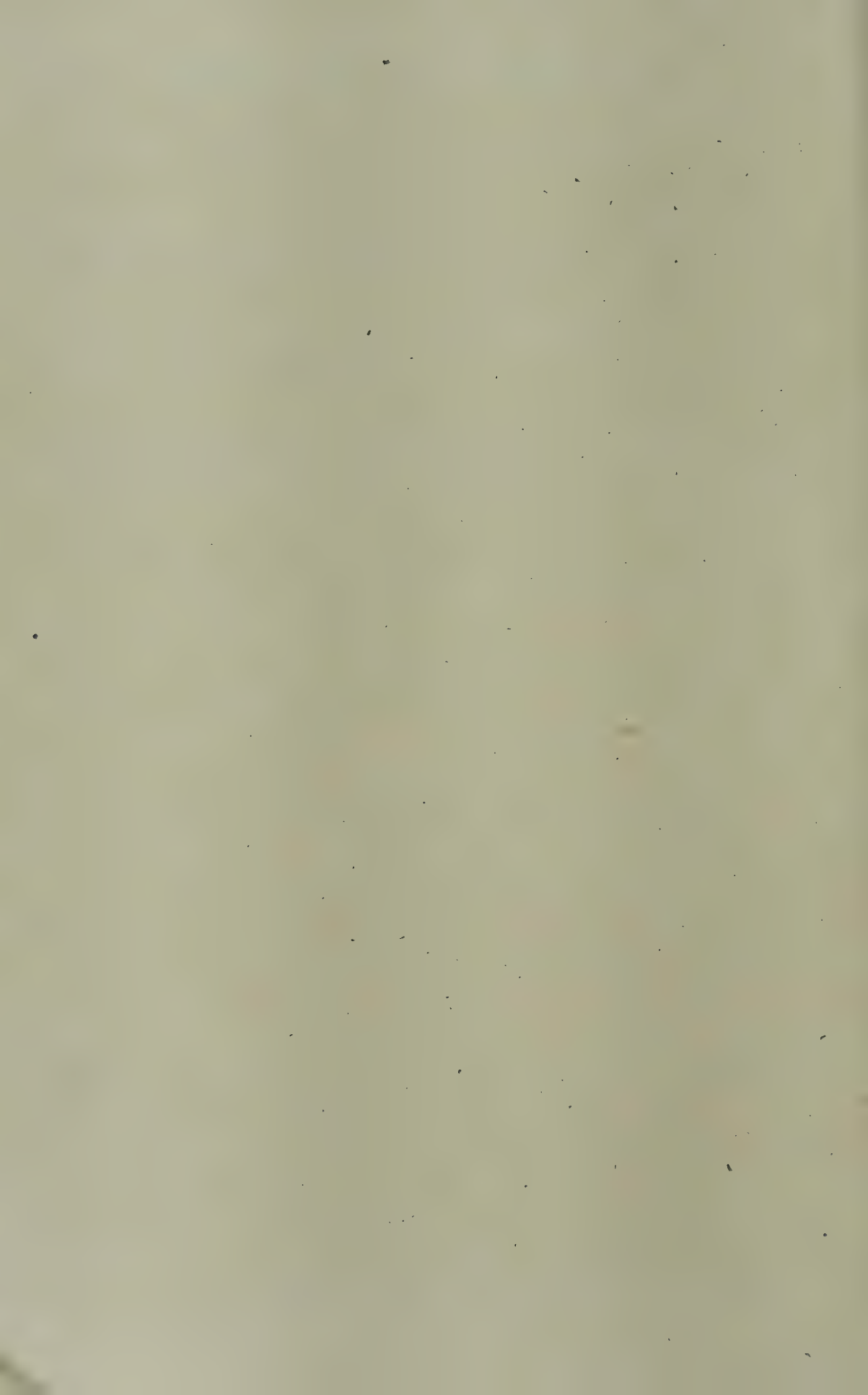
31. What evidence have we in this story of trade and intercourse between Europe and Eastern Asia in the early Middle Ages ?

32. On what idea does this legend rest ? Briefly outline any other story in which the same theme occurs.

33. Explain the term " factor " as used in this tale.

34. Of what story from early English history does this tale remind you ?

THE END





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and  
The Brothers Grimm

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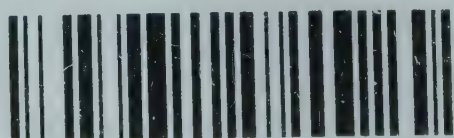
¶ The stories dealt with are : *The Pied Piper* ; *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury* ; *The Travelling Musicians* (Grimm) ; *Pastorella* (from *The Faerie Queene*) ; *Robin Hood and Alan-a-Dale* ; *The Luck of Troy* (Homer) ; *The Story of Dorigen* (Chaucer) ; *The Tale of Griselda* (Chaucer) ; *Twice is Too Much* (*Arabian Nights*) ; *Caliph for a Day* (*Arabian Nights*) ; *The Swineherd* (Andersen) ; *The Emperor's New Clothes* (Andersen) ; *Lady Clare* (Tennyson) ; *The Jackdaw of Rheims*.

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